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CM, DKS 'make peace' over idlis

The duo met over breakfast at the behest of the Congress High Command

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar sought to project unity on Saturday as the two leaders shared a breakfast of idli, vada, sambar, chutney and uppittu at the Chief Minister's residence, Cauvery.

The meeting, convened at the behest of the Congress High Command, came amid an escalating leadership row that has gripped Karnataka's 2.5-year-old Congress government. Addressing a joint press conference after the meeting, both leaders dismissed reports of discord.

Siddaramaiah said the breakfast was aimed at clearing "unwanted confusion" created by the media. "We don't have differences. There are no differences today, and there won't be any in the future. I will ensure that it does not exist," he said. He added that the two would jointly lead the party into the 2028 Assembly elections and that the government remained united, with no ministers or ruling MLAs acting against it.

The Chief Minister also said the government was prepared to face the Opposition during the legislature session commencing from 1 December. With the BJP warning that it may move a no-confidence motion if the leadership dispute continued, Siddaramaiah said the Congress had strategised on how to counter the BJP and JD(S) in the Assembly. "If they bring an adjournment motion, we will tackle it," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a breakfast meeting amid the ongoing leadership tussle, at the latter's residence Kaveri in Bengaluru on Saturday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress president, stressed that there was "no factionalism". He said people had brought the Congress to power and the party must live up to their expectations. He confirmed that the discussion covered strategies for the 2028 polls, handling the Opposition in the Belagavi winter session, and preparing for a possible no-confidence motion.

Shivakumar also reaffirmed that the Congress would fight the 2028 elections under the leadership of AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and MP Rahul Gandhi. "The party is in a very difficult stage in the country. We still have confidence that Karnataka will play a major role in its revival. We will repeat in 2028 what we achieved in 2023," he said. In a social media post earlier, he described the breakfast meeting as "productive".

The leadership issue has simmered for two months and intensified after 20 November, when the government completed 2.5 years in office. Siddaramaiah has insisted he has a full five-year mandate as CM, while Shivakumar has hinted that he was promised rotation after 2.5 years. The Congress high command stepped in on Friday, directing the two leaders to resolve the matter through dialogue—leading to Saturday's highly watched breakfast meeting.

Congress sources told **Salar News** that the party's top brass was keen for both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar to come to terms, and a meeting over breakfast was considered the way forward. During the meeting, Shivakumar is reported to have broached the issue of the confidential understanding on a "rotational chief ministership for 2.5 years". Initially, the CM is said to have denied any such understanding, but later agreed. Siddaramaiah is reported to have said that he was ready to give up his post anytime the Congress high command asked him to do so. *— Salar News*

Cyclone Ditwah triggers rainfall, strong winds and high tides, in Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

India braces for cyclone's landfall

CHENNAI, 29 NOV

Rain triggered by Cyclone Ditwah, now moving over the open sea towards the Tamil Nadu coast, lashed coastal and delta districts on Saturday, with Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam bearing the brunt.

Chennai Airport announced the cancellation of around 54 flights due to the cyclone. "With the India Meteorology Department warning of very heavy rainfall with winds of 10 to 15 knots, gusting to 25 knots, the airport is taking all possible precautionary measures," it said in a post on X.

The IMD said the storm moved north-northwest at 8 kmh and was centred at 5.30am on Saturday at 190 km south-southeast of Karaikal, 300 km south-southeast of Puducherry and 400 km south of Chennai. It is likely to move north-northwest and reach the southwest Bay near north Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and south Andhra Pradesh coasts early on 30 November.

State Revenue and Disaster Management Minister KKSSR Ramachandran said it was still unclear whether Cyclone Ditwah would make landfall near Chennai.

"Twenty-eight disaster response teams, including SDRF and NDRF units, are on standby. We plan to bring 10 more teams from other states. The Indian Air Force and Coast Guard have been alerted, and monitoring teams will be sent to the districts tomorrow," he told reporters. No fatalities have been reported so far, though 16 livestock have died and 24 huts have been damaged. Nearly 6,000 relief camps have been set up across districts. *—PTI*

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India sends aid to cyclone-hit SL

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

India on Saturday sent a contingent of 80 NDRF rescuers and search dogs to Sri Lanka as heavy floods hit the neighbouring country, an official spokesperson said.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team have been divided into two teams. The teams, along with four rescue dogs, took off on an IL-76 IAF aircraft from the Hindon airbase near Delhi for Colombo at around 4 am on Saturday, the spokesperson said.

He said the teams are carrying inflatable boats, hydraulic cutting and breaching tools, communication equipment, first-aid kits and other rescue equipment. The deployment is part of Operation Sagar Bandhu launched by India.

The Indian Air Force on Saturday delivered 21 tonnes of relief material along with around 80 NDRF personnel and eight tonnes of equipment to Sri Lanka. A C-130 aircraft carrying food and sanitary supplies reached Colombo's Bandaranaike Internat ional Airport at around 1.30 am. *—PTI*

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Border Security Force (BSF) personnel patrol the Line of Control (LOC), in Jammu on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

'Pak shifted 72 terror launchpads from border'

JAMMU, 29 NOV

Around six dozen terror launchpads have been shifted deep inside Pakistan after Operation Sindoor, and the BSF is ready to inflict heavy losses if the government decides to resume operations, senior BSF officers said on Saturday.

"After the BSF destroyed terror launchpads along the border during Operation Sindoor, Pakistan shifted them away from the border. Around 12 launchpads are now based in Sialkot and Zaffarwal. Similarly, 60 launchpads have been shifted far away from the border," BSF DIG Vikram said. The officer said the number of launchpads, as well as the terrorists in them, keeps changing. Reports generally say that the launchpads have become active, indicating training before terrorists are moved to other areas. Asked about Pakistani Rangers running away from their posts during Operation Sindoor, the IG said once the situation becomes normal, everyone must return to their positions.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Army spokesman Lt. Gen. Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry criticised the Indian Army chief's remarks that 'Operation Sindoor' was only a "trailer."

Lt. Gen. Chaudhry, who heads the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), said, "We can't do anything about a delusional mind." *—PTI*

Despite smog, crowds flock to ride hot air balloon in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Although the AQI is over 350 and the authorities have issued an alert asking people to stay indoors, the hot air balloon rides at Delhi's Baansera Park near Sarai Kale Khan have drawn people of all age groups, from children to senior citizens. Many of them are visiting the event for the first time.

Pinki and Dinesh Kumar travelled from Ghaziabad to take the ride, while many others reached the park early to secure their turn.

Anil Jain, a resident of Rajouri Garden, who is in his 80s said that he had come to witness the event out of curiosity. "This is the second time I have seen something like this here. I had taken a hot air balloon ride nearly 25 years ago near the Red Fort," he said.

Visitors take the hot air balloon ride in New Delhi on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Deepak Jain, who bought three tickets for his wife and brother, was among the first riders of the day. "It was our first experience, and we were thrilled. His wife, Babita Jain, said more arrangements should be made for senior citizens. "We had to climb into the basket and then get down the same way. There should be a gate or an easier entry option for elderly people," she said. *—PTI*

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Politics now 'trumps' economics: EAM

KOLKATA, 29 NOV

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said global politics is increasingly overshadowing economics

Speaking after receiving an Honorary Doctorate from IIM Calcutta, he said, "This is an era where politics increasingly trumps economics... and that is not a pun." Jaishankar stated that the United States, once the key supporter of the international system, has now adopted radically new terms of engagement, dealing with countries individually.

He added that China has "long played by its own rules" and continues to do so. In response to global fragmentation, supply insecurity and competing pressures, he said nations are hedging their risks.

India, he stressed, is pursuing self-reliance, strengthening manufacturing, infrastructure and scientific development. *—PTI*

No oral mentions: CJI orders 2-day listing for urgent cases

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has announced new measures to streamline the listing of cases, which will take effect from 1 December. According to the circular issued by the Supreme Court, litigants will no longer need to mention their matters before a bench, as fresh cases will be listed automatically.

The circular states that all newly filed cases involving personal liberty or those seeking urgent interim relief will be scheduled within two working days once defects are addressed and verification is completed. To ensure faster disposal of bail petitions, parties must serve an advance copy to the respective Nodal Officer or Standing Counsel representing the Union of India, State, or Union Territory.

In matters requiring exceptional urgency such as anticipatory bail, death penalty, habeas corpus, eviction, dispossession, or demolition requests may be made between 10.00am And 10.30am. for early listing.

The circular further clarifies that no Senior Counsel will be permitted to make oral mentions before any court, and junior lawyers are encouraged to do so instead. Additionally, adjournment letters for old regular hearing matters will not be accepted, to expedite their disposal. *—PTI*

6,000 FLIGHTS HIT GLOBALLY

Indian airlines rush to fix Airbus A320 software after safety alert

NEW DELHI/ WASHINGTON, 29 NOV

IndiGo, Air India and Air India Express on Saturday started carrying out software upgrade of A320 family planes to address a potential flight control issue, and requisite modifications have been done for 80 per cent of the affected 338 aircraft, an exercise that also resulted in delays and some flight cancellations.

According to the latest data from the aviation regulator DGCA, IndiGo and Air India did not cancel any flights, while Air India Express cancelled four flights due to the system modification process.

Flight delays have been 60-90 minutes at various airports, sources said.

Most of the nearly 6,000 affected aircraft worldwide need software upgrades, while some might require hardware realignment.

According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 338 A320 family planes in India required the update. As of 10:00 IST on Saturday, software upgrades were completed for 189 aircraft, with all remaining planes scheduled to be updated by 5:29 IST on 30 November. IndiGo has upgraded 160 of its 200 affected aircraft, Air India 42 of 113, and Air India Express four of 25.

The upgrades were carried out at airline hubs in Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata. Despite the large-scale operation, airlines reported no cancellations, though some flights experienced delays of 60–90 minutes.

The safety directive follows an alert from Airbus after a JetBlue A320 suffered a sudden uncommanded pitch down on 30 October, injuring more than 15 passengers. Investigations revealed that intense solar radiation could corrupt critical flight control data, potentially affecting Elevator Aileron Computers (ELACs) that control the plane's pitch and roll. Former pilot Ehsan Khalid explained that even brief malfunctions could be dangerous during take-off or landing.

Most of the nearly 6,000 affected aircraft worldwide need software upgrades **PHOTO: PTI**

Globally, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have mandated airlines to implement the software fix. Airbus acknowledged that the upgrade could cause operational disruptions but emphasised that safety is the priority. The A320 family, including A319s, A320s, and A321s in both CEO and NEO configurations, is the world's best-selling single-aisle aircraft, with more than 8,100 planes in service globally. Most require only a software update, though a small number may also need hardware realignment.

In the United States, airlines including American Airlines, Delta, and United have begun the upgrade process. American has 209 affected aircraft out of 480 A320 family planes, while Delta expects fewer than 50 A321neos to require updates. All Nippon Airways in Japan cancelled 65 domestic flights on Saturday to accommodate the upgrade schedule.

IndiGo operates over 2,300 flights daily and stated that the updates are being completed within the EASA-prescribed timeline, with minimal impact on schedules. Air India similarly confirmed that over 40 per cent of its affected fleet had undergone the reset by Saturday morning.

Airbus, headquartered in France, emphasised that the software issue, although significant, is being actively addressed and does not pose immediate danger when properly managed. *—PTI*

High Command should've intervened: Moily

Cong leader says silence is disastrous; DKS says the State should be united against the Centre

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Amid the lingering power tussle in the State, Congress leader M Veerappa Moily expressed concern over the delay in resolving the issue and said the party leadership should step in immediately.

Moily, a former union minister, said that the party's "totally internal problem has blown up and now the castes have taken over, the Swamijis have taken over".

Vokkaliga pontiffs had supported Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar while AHINDA groups backed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

"I think the High Command should immediately step in now and stop this. Whether to change the CM or appoint a new one, or whatever it is, this has to be done internally," Moily said on Friday.

He also opposed "so-called 50-50 formula", saying it hasn't helped Congress but added that if such a commitment has been made, it should be honoured.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar looks at CM Siddaramaiah at a press conference after their breakfast meeting, on Saturday **PHOTO: SALAR**

"Silence is disastrous. They (Congress High Command) need to step forward and say don't continue this kind of lobbying," he added.

"Delhi has to halt this development first, then take a decision... Whoever is suitable to lead the party should be selected or the person to be continued," he said.

Meanwhile, after meet Siddaramaiah for breakfast, Shivakumar called said the State should stand united against the Centre.

"There are some big issues that the Parliament members need to raise in this (Winter) Session," he said on Saturday. "Whatever they (Central government) have promised on sugarcane, maize issues and many other programs, they are not helping the State. The other day, the Chief Minister also met the Prime Minister and gave a representation. Dinesh (Gundu Rao) also requested the Prime Minister on this issue. So we are going to tell our Parliament members, don't waste your time... You have to go (to Delhi) together."

He also said the government would submit a renewed Detailed Project Report for the Mekedatu Project after the Supreme Court hearing. Meanwhile, Shivakumar's brother and former MLA DK Suresh said there was no talks of a power sharing agreement.

"Both leaders clearly said so," he said in New Delhi. "There was no talk of power sharing, so we don't need to discuss it again." *—Agencies*

Congress is united, claims Venugopal; DKS' aide says wait

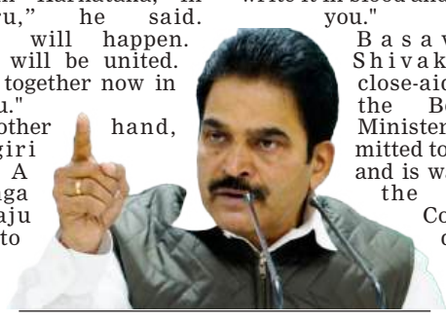
T'PURAM/ DAVANGERE, 29 NOV

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal on Saturday dismissed any speculations about a power tussle saying that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar are united after the pair's breakfast meeting.

"You can see what is happening in Karnataka, in Bengaluru," he said. "Nothing will happen. Congress will be united. They are together now in Bengaluru."

On the other hand, Channagiri MLA Shivaganga Basavaraju reacted to the meeting, saying, "There is only one faction among us: the Congress faction. The Congress High Command will decide everything. The High Command has not cracked the whip on us. The CM chair is not vacant; let's talk once it is."

However, Basavaraju reiterated Shivakumar's claim to the CM post, stating, "If DK Shivakumar does not become CM in December, I said, I will write it in blood and give it to you."



Basavaraj, Shivakumar's close-aide, said the Bengaluru Minister is committed to his word and is waiting for the High Command's decision. *—ANI*

Caste groups continue to back their favourites

MYSURU, 29 NOV

Members of various AHINDA organisations held a meeting in Mysuru urging the Congress High Command to allow Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to complete his full five year term. On the other hand, members of the Vokkaligara Sangha took out a bike rally in support of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

Members of the State Backward Classes Forum, AHINDA Okkuta and the Constitution Protection Committee held meeting at a private hotel in Mysuru and planned to launch a series of agitations in support of Siddaramaiah. State Backward Classes Forum President KS Shivaramu said that AHINDA leaders have planned to hold a protest outside the AICC Office in New Delhi.

He said that the AHINDA community (acronym for backward classes, Dalits, etc.) had been instrumental in bringing the Congress to power in the State. Siddaramaiah is seen as a backward classes leader.

Meanwhile, members of Vokkaligara Sangha took out a protest bike rally from Chandramouleshwara temple from Vontikoppal to Kote Anjaneyaswamy temple to support Shivakumar, who is from the community. The group said that it was instrumental in bringing the Congress to power.

—Salar News

CM, DyCM are meeting after breakup, says BJP

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly and BJP MLA R Ashoka said that there was no coordination between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, and it was unclear who the current Chief Minister was.

Ashoka said, "Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar are engaged in a street fight. The Congress High Command is weak.... In the last one year, there has been no development, and there is no coordination between the CM and Deputy CM. Ministers are not coming to Vidhana Soudha. Some MLAs went to Delhi, and more than 12 to 13 MLAs to a resort in Bengaluru. We don't know who the CM is. Siddaramaiah is not CM now."

Meanwhile, BJP National Spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla took a swipe at the breakfast meeting, calling it a "breakup par makeup" meeting and alleging that the two leaders were attempting to bury their internal rift by putting on a display of unity. *—ANI*

Waste of time: JD(S) mocks breakfast meet

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Union Minister and JD(S) MP HD Kumaraswamy slammed the Congress government on Saturday, calling the power tussle "a drama" and accusing the ruling party of neglecting development.

"We are eagerly waiting for the outcome of this ultimate drama," he said. "Where is the development? Development has collapsed... Work started by the previous governments is continuing. There is no fresh work. They are just grabbing land."

Meanwhile, JD(S) MLA and HDK's son Nikhil Kumaraswamy mocked the breakfast meeting, saying the Congress was "united only for breakfast" but deeply divided on all other matters.

"They had given around 540 promises, out of which only nine have been fulfilled. Yet they claim they've completed 239," he said. "Thousands of issues need attention, but instead we are discussing leadership quarrels."

Meanwhile, the JD(S)' official X account posted that "The High Command needs to step in to even serve snacks in Congress." *—ANI*

Can't help it if people wanted me as CM: Dr G

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

- Parameshwara, who recently threw his hat into the ring for the CM race, said that people naturally want their candidate to head the government

Home Minister G Parameshwara said that there was nothing wrong with people wanting him as the Chief Minister. He said that it is up to the High Command to resolve the issues.

"Somebody wants DK Shivakumar as Chief Minister, somebody wants Siddaramaiah to continue, and somebody wants me to be the Chief Minister, and somebody wants somebody else," he said. "So you cannot stop the aspirations of the people. Every time there is a talk about the Chief Minister, whether after the election or somewhere in between, Dalits express their aspirations. There is nothing wrong with it. It is up to the High Command."

He added that the High Command was watching everything and taking note. *—ANI*

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Children during Adoption Meet to mark Adoption Awareness Month 2025, organised by the Directorate of Child Protection at Bal Bhavan in Bengaluru, on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BJP seeks to extend Assembly over North Karnataka issues

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

The Opposition BJP urged the State government to extend the upcoming Legislature session by at least 20 days, arguing that a longer sitting is essential to comprehensively address issues affecting North Karnataka.

The Leader of Opposition in the State assembly, R Ashoka said that the proposed eight-day session would be insufficient to examine the persistent developmental gaps in districts such as Belagavi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Kalaburagi, Raichur and Koppal.

He noted that critical matters related to irrigation, infrastructure, regional investment and farmer distress require detailed debate and policy clarity.

"The problems of North Karnataka cannot be covered in a brief session," Ashoka said in a statement.

The BJP leader asked the government to allot adequate time for department-wise discussions and scrutiny of pending projects.

He also called for structured debates on drought management, drinking-water shortages and delayed infrastructure works across the region.

BJP's Opposition Leader in the Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, Opposition Leader in the Assembly R Ashoka and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy during a coordination meeting for the Winter Assembly Session, in Bengaluru, on Saturday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

- The problems of North Karnataka cannot be covered in an eight day session, Ashoka said, noting problems such as irrigation, drought and floods

Ashoka further stressed the need for transparency in the government's handling of various welfare schemes and grants, stating that opposition members must be given sufficient opportunity to question implementation gaps.

This came as the BJP and JD(S) met to plan their strategies for the Winter Session. *—PTI*

ALL INDIA MILLI COUNCIL

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan felicitated on the occasion of 33rd foundation day of All India Milli Council. The event was attended by Maulana Khalid Saifulla Rahmani, President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, former Ministers CM Ibrahim and R Roshan Baig, among others, on Saturday **PHOTO: SALAR**

State seeks Central funds for Jal Jeevan Mission

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

- Minister Priyank Kharge wrote a letter to Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil said that out of the total expenditure, the State's share is Rs 24,598.45 crore, while the Central share is only Rs 11,786.63 crore

State Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Priyank Kharge, has urged Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil to expedite the release of pending funds under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to ensure timely access to safe drinking water for rural households in the state.

Kharge noted that Karnataka has made significant advancements in the mission, with over 86 per cent of rural households having received water connections. He highlighted that ongoing multi-village and single-village schemes are at various stages of implementation.

In a letter to Patil, Kharge pointed out that the State has allocated Rs 11,050 crore for the current financial year and has invested a total of Rs 35,698.58 crore in JJM against an approved cost of Rs 69,487.60 crore. "Out of the total expenditure, the State share is Rs 24,598.45 crore, while the central share is only Rs 11,786.63 crore," he stated, reflecting a significant shortfall in central government funding.

With bills amounting to approximately Rs 1,700 crore pending, Kharge warned that delays could hinder progress, as some contractors have begun to downsize their workforce. He emphasised the urgency for the central share to be released promptly to prevent further hindrances to effective implementation of the scheme. *—PTI*

REPATRIATED TO MEGHALAYA

24 girls held illegally in NGO, rescued

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 29 NOV

Twenty-four minor girls from Meghalaya who were illegally brought and housed in a hostel by an NGO have been rescued and are being repatriated to their native by flight on Tuesday. This comes after a Karnataka High Court order had asked the District authorities to take suitable steps to repatriate the girls to their native place.

The girls, mostly children of single parents and from economically weaker sections, were allegedly brought to Penumale village in Bagepalli taluk in Chikkaballapur by Aims for Seva, an NGO operating in the area.

The NGO authorities brought the girls on the promise of providing shelter, food and education to them. However, that was not the case as the children were allegedly not provided basic facilities and were made to

reside in a hostel called "Sowmya Kesuvanapalli" at the village.

District Child Protection Officer B Nautaj, said the NGO gets aid for adopting the girls, which is why Aims for Seva brought the girls. The girls were reportedly not sexually exploited or trafficked.

The district Child Help line had received a complaint on 8 July. Soon, a team of authorities led by Nautaj and AG Sudhakar, member of the District Child Welfare committee, inspected the site, where they found the girls living in the hostel without basic amenities.

When they questioned the hostel authorities whether they had obtained permission to bring the girls from Meghalaya, the hostel authorities failed to provide convincing answers.

Departmental authorities then rescued the girls and housed them in government-run Balakiyara Bala Mandira.

However, the NGO then filed a series of writ petitions before the High Court against the government authorities, alleging that the State had kidnapped the girls.

After hearing all the stakeholders and also taking the views of the parents into consideration, a division bench of the court ordered the district administration to take suitable steps to repatriate the children to their native places. Incidentally, the judgement was delivered on 14 November, Children's Day, said Nautaj.

During the four months of court proceedings, the district administration said it helped educate the girls. Authorities were to make arrangements for their flight travel, while SP Kushal Chowkse deputed a women police to accompany the children during their travel. *—Salar News*

5 of Kolar family killed in head-on crash in Kurnool

KURNOOL, 29 NOV

Five people of a family were killed when the car in which they were travelling rammed an SUV in Kurnool district on Saturday morning. The dead were from the Chikkahosahalli village of Bangarapet taluk in Kolar district.

The accident took place at around 4.45 am on Saturday when the driver of the Swift Dzire car apparently dozed off, resulting in a head-on collision with a Fortuner car.

The Dzire car was completely crushed, killing all its occupants instantly. Sources said two passengers in the Fortuner were seriously injured.

The deceased are Venkateshappa, 60; his daughter Meenakshi 32; son-in-law Satish, 36;, and grandchildren Rutvik and Bhuvit Goud of Chikka Hosahalli village in Kolar district.

They were travelling to Mantralaya for darshan of Sri Raghavendra Swamy. *—Salar News*

Chh'garh Congress appoints leaders for 41 districts

RAIPUR, 29 NOV

The AICC has appointed presidents for 41 district units in Chhattisgarh as part of its organisational restructuring under the 'Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan', aimed at strengthening grassroots and urban structures, a party official said. The list includes five women leaders and follows senior leader Sachin Pilot's two-day state visit. AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal said Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge approved the appointments after detailed district-level reviews by observers and consultations with senior leaders. Key appointments include Shrikumar Shankar Menon (Raipur city), Rajendra Pappu Banjare (Raipur Rural), Harish Lakhma (Sukma), and Jitendra Udya Mudliyar (Rajnandgaon city). *—PTI*

Cong, CPI(M) MLAs stage walkout in Assam Assembly

GUWAHATI, 29 NOV

Congress and CPI(M) legislators staged a walkout in the Assam Assembly on Saturday after Speaker Biswajit Daimary disallowed a discussion on the situation in Tezpur University. Speaker Daimary maintained that no discussion can be held about a Central university. The LoP, Debabrata Saikia, of the Congress, sought to know whether his Zero Hour notice for a discussion on Tezpur University has been allowed. He claimed that there was uncertainty in the university due to the tension sparked by the death of singer Zubeen Garg. Saikia said the ice-chancellor is "absconding" after facing heat from students for allegedly disrespecting Garg. The speaker said the matter can be raised during discussion on the Education Department bills later. *—PTI*

Navy receives advanced stealth frigate 'Taragiri'

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The indigenous advanced stealth frigate 'Taragiri' has been delivered to the Indian Navy, officials announced on Saturday. The vessel is the fourth Nilgiri-class warship under Project 17A and the third built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilding Ltd (MDL). It was handed over to the Navy on 28 November in Mumbai, marking a major milestone in India's drive for self-reliance in warship design and construction. The Navy described Taragiri as a "quantum leap" in naval design, stealth, firepower, automation and survivability, calling it a symbol of aatmanirbharta. Project 17A frigates are versatile multi-mission platforms built to meet both current and emerging maritime challenges. The warship's powerful weapons and sensors suite includes BrahMos missiles, the MFSTAR radar, MRSAM surface-to-air missiles, 30mm and 12.7mm close-in weapon systems, and anti-submarine rockets and torpedoes. *—PTI*

National Herald case: Delhi court delays decision

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

A Delhi court has postponed its decision regarding the Enforcement Directorate (ED) chargesheet in the National Herald case, now set for 16 December. Special Judge Vishal Gogne deferred the emerging order, which alleges that Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, along with deceased party figures Motilal Vora and Oscar Fernandes, participated in conspiracy and money laundering against Associated Journals Limited (AJL). The ED claims they wrongfully acquired properties valued at approximately Rs 2,000 crore, with the Gandhis allegedly holding 76 per cent of Young Indian's shares, which purportedly appropriated AJL's assets in exchange for a Rs 90 crore loan. Those named in the chargesheet include Sonia, Rahul, and other affiliated individuals and firms. *—PTI*

BJP blames EC for 'irregularities' in WB's SIR

EC appoints 12 IAS officers as 'Electoral Roll Observers'

SILIGURI/COOCH BEHAR/ KOLKATA, 29 NOV

The political temperature in West Bengal rose further on Saturday as the BJP accused the Election Commission of failing to act swiftly amid the alleged were large-scale irregularities in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Leader of the Opposition in West Bengal Assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, on Saturday alleged that the state administration was involved in manipulating the electoral rolls during the ongoing SIR, and that senior officials were personally intervening to retain ineligible names in the voter list. He said the EC should have acted "a little more swiftly" during the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls.

Speaking to reporters in Siliguri in north Bengal, Adhikari said, "The EC depends on the state machinery, which is indulged in fraud."

Additionally, The EC has also appointed 12 IAS officers as 'Electoral Roll Observers' to oversee key aspects of electoral roll preparation following the SIR and assist district election officers (DEOs) and electoral registration officers (EROs) in taking corrective measures, he said.

Gupta, a 1990-batch IAS officer of West Bengal cadre, will be overseeing that the process of special intensive revision or SIR was carried out as per the directions of the EC, and ensure that no eligible person is left out of the electoral rolls and no ineligible elector is included in it, the official said on Friday.

Meanwhile, The EC wrote to West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar, directing him to ensure the security of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) during the SIR exercise after receiving reports that there is "an apparent threat" to their safety. *—PTI*

BJP leaders Suvendu Adhikari and Raju Bista meet Indian cricketer Richa Ghosh at her residence, in Siliguri, West Bengal, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

2 arrested for assaulting BLO during UP SIR exercise

A booth level officer (BLO) and a lekhpal were allegedly assaulted while conducting the SIR of electoral rolls in the Salon area. BLO Aarti Yadav reported that village head Deepak Yadav and his father Krishna Yadav entered Pure Ahiran Mohaddi Nagar, destroyed survey forms, and behaved aggressively towards her and lekhpal Avinash. Authorities were alerted, and Salon Sub-Divisional Magistrate Chandra Prakash visited the site. "They not only tore government documents but also obstructed official work," stated Circle Officer Yadvendra Bahadur Pal. *—PTI*

Plea in SC requests 3-month SIR extension in UP

The Bharatiya Kisan Union Azad Trust has petitioned the Supreme Court for a three-month extension of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh. The appeal claims that the four-week period is "administratively impossible" for 15.35 crore voters, risking mass disenfranchisement. The plea aims to prevent wrongful deletions, protect rural voters, and ensure accurate electoral rolls. The Election Commission commenced the SIR exercise on 4 November under the banner 'Shuddh Nirvachak Namavali - Majboot Loktantra' (Clean Electoral Roll - Strong Democracy), which continues until 4 December. *—PTI*

BLOs press for relief amid SIR pressure in WB

KOLKATA, 29 NOV

Members of the Block Level Officers (BLOs) rights platform, with ties to the Trinamool Congress, protested outside the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Kolkata on Saturday. They demanded compensation for colleagues who have fallen ill or died while performing electoral roll-related duties, in addition to better scheduling for future assignments.

The demonstration coincided with the arrival of a special Election Commission team in the city. Protesters alleged that their requests for a meeting with the officials were ignored, despite waiting for hours. Family members of a Murshidabad-based BLO, who was hospitalised after suffering a stroke reportedly due to work pressure, joined the protest, underscoring the urgent nature of their grievances.

The activists raised two main demands: compensation for families of workers suffering severe health issues or fatalities while on duty, and a commitment from the Election Commission for more organised and adequately timed future duties. As tensions escalated, police were deployed to disperse the gathering outside the CEO's office. The Commission had previously warned a Trinamool delegation about avoiding disruptions to official activities. *—PTI*

'SHED AURA OF AWE & FEAR'

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose formally renames Raj Bhavan to Lok Bhavan in Kolkata on Saturday *PHOTO: ANI*

WB Guv renames Raj Bhavan as Lok Bhavan

KOLKATA, 29 NOV

- The official notification clarified that the renaming will be reflected in all official communications, including letterheads, signage at the gates, and the governor's website.

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose has renamed the Raj Bhavan in Kolkata as Lok Bhavan, following a directive from the central government.

The change also applies to the Raj Bhavan holdings in Flagstaff House and Darjeeling, with immediate effect, according to an official notification citing the Ministry of Home Affairs' communication dated 25 November, 2025.

Bose highlighted that the previous Jana Raj Bhavan initiative was aimed at making the governor's residence more accessible and responsive to citizens.

"The concept sought to shed the aura of 'awe and fear' and make the establishment open to people from all walks of life," he said in a post on X.

Over the past three years, the Raj Bhavan had actively engaged with citizens during natural disasters, instances of violence, and complaints of atrocities, embodying a people-centric approach.

The governor also noted that the renaming aligns with a nationwide initiative under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, which mandates that all Raj Bhavans and Raj Niwas across India be renamed as Lok Bhavan and Lok Niwas respectively, reflecting the growing participation of citizens in governance and the vision of a "Viksit Bharat."

The official notification clarified that the renaming will be reflected in all official communications, including letterheads, signage at the gates, and the governor's website. Bose emphasised that the move represents a continuation of efforts to make the governor's office more approachable, constructive, and engaged with the aspirations and challenges of the people of Bengal. *—PTI*

Kerala Cong 'backs' suspended MLA Rahul

T'PURAM, 29 NOV

- Potty is the main accused in the cases lodged by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) regarding loss of gold from the Sabarimala shrine.

The Congress and the BJP said that the police action against Palakkad MLA Rahul Mamkootathil was launched to divert attention from the probe into the loss of gold from Sabarimala.

Senior Congress leader K. Muraleedharan told reporters here on Saturday that both the CPI(M) and the CPI have a hand in the matter.

BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the police action was taken days before the local body polls to divert attention from the Sabarimala gold loss issue.

He claimed that the Congress and the CPI(M) are trying to divert public attention from the Sabarimala issue. He also alleged that what happened in Sabarimala did not occur when the CPI(M) alone was in power.

"It has been going on for much longer than that. There are photographs of Unnikrishnan Potty with Sonia Gandhi, Anto Antony and Adoor Prakash," he contended.

Potty is the main accused in the cases lodged by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) regarding loss of gold from the Sabarimala shrine.

KPCC President Sunny Joseph on Saturday said that an editorial in the party mouthpiece in Kerala defending Mamkootathil was not its stand and instructions have been issued to correct it. *—PTI*

Cong contesting 158 municipal president posts in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

The Congress is contesting 158 out of 288 municipal council president posts in Maharashtra, polls to which will be held on 2 December, a party functionary said on Saturday.

It is contesting 41 municipal council president posts in alliance with local outfits and the rest with major partners like the Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP), both of which are part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi, and the Vanchit Bhaujan Aghadi.

The elections to 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats will take place on 2 December and [votes will be counted on 3 December.

More than 1.07 crore voters will elect 6859 members and 288 municipal presidents.

A total of 13355 polling stations have been set up. *—PTI*

Rahul meets Kharge, Bihar leaders after poll drubbing

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

- Gandhi and Kharge had earlier met Bihar leaders and all contesting candidates at Indira Bhawan in batches to ascertain the reasons for the party's drubbing at the hustings.

Congress leader **Rahul Gandhi** on Saturday met party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and is learnt to have discussed the political scenario in Bihar, where the party was decimated in the recently-concluded assembly elections.

Sources said Gandhi drove down to Kharge's residence where he met leaders from Bihar.

Party in-charge for Bihar Krishna Allavaru and state party Chief Rajesh Ram were also present during the meeting.

Gandhi and Kharge had earlier met Bihar leaders and all contesting candidates at Indira Bhawan in batches to ascertain the reasons for the party's drubbing at the hustings.

The candidates are learnt to have cited the NDA's Rs 10,000 incentive scheme for women, internal squabbling and differences within Bihar Congress and late distribution of party tickets as some of the reasons for the defeat in the polls. *—PTI*

Tejashwi named leader of Oppn in Assembly

PATNA, 29 NOV

Tejashwi Yadav of the RJD has been unanimously elected leader of Bihar's opposition coalition, the Mahagathbandhan, in the state legislature. The decision was taken at a meeting hosted by Yadav ahead of the five-day assembly session from 1 Dec, where all newly elected members of the 243-seat legislature will be sworn in. RJD MLA Bhai Virendra confirmed that Yadav will also serve as the party's leader in the assembly. Congress MLC Samir Kumar Singh, a state unit working president, said the decision was unanimous. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF PUTIN'S VISIT

India and Russia set to ratify crucial military pact

MOSCOW, 29 NOV

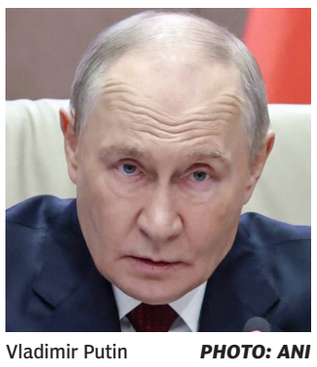
The Russian lower house of Parliament is set to ratify a crucial military pact with India ahead of President Vladimir Putin's state visit on 4-5 December for the 23rd bilateral summit, according to reports.

Signed on 18 February, 2025 in Moscow by the Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar and erstwhile Deputy Defence Minister Alexander Fomin the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) is to enhance military cooperation between the two strategic partners.

The State Duma has uploaded the RELOS in its ratification database along with the Russian government's note and said that "the Russian government believes that the ratification of the document will strengthen cooperation between Russia and India in the military sphere", official news agency TASS reported.

The RELOS agreement aims to streamline coordination for joint military exercises, disaster relief and other operations.

According to local defence sources, RELOS will enhance military cooperation by simplifying procedures for joint activities, including exercises and disaster relief.



Vladimir Putin *PHOTO: ANI*

- RELOS will enhance military cooperation by simplifying procedures for joint activities, including exercises and disaster relief, said sources.

Agreements of this kind expand the geographic opportunities for peacetime operations for both participating parties.

The Indian Navy's Talwar class frigates as well as INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier are equipped to sail in freezing climate of Arctic can use the Russian naval bases for logistic support while Russian Navy can use Indian facilities to boost its presence to offset Chinese and other outside countries presence in the Indian Ocean Region, experts here believe. *—PTI*

90-year-old contests Kerala civic polls

KOCHI, 29 NOV

Amidst the bustling campaigns of major political parties, 90-year-old Narayanan Nair is making a unique bid for the local body elections in Ashamannoor village, Kerala. Dressed in a white shirt and dhoti, the retired government employee is campaigning for himself as an independent candidate for the second ward of the village panchayat.

This is Nair's first attempt at electoral politics, and he is taking a personal approach by visiting homes to request support.

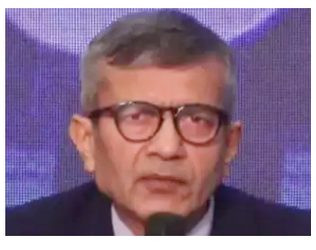
"Age is not a barrier for anything," he stated, expressing his vision for the development of his ward.

When asking a local woman for her vote, he said, "Please vote for me. My symbol is Kettle," to which she warmly responded, "We will definitely vote for you."

Unlike candidates of major parties who rely on teams of supporters, Nair prefers direct interaction. *—PTI*

'Defence startups need orders, not govt venture capitals'

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV



- Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit said the armed forces are responsible for cross-border threats and are developing counter-UAS & integrated air defence systems.

India does not require a government-backed venture capital fund for its defence sector, as assured orders and faster contract approvals are sufficient to attract private investment, defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said at ANI's National Security Summit.

He noted that defence startups and MSMEs secure funding through their order books, adding that a sovereign venture capital fund, if created, would only be supplementary. Singh highlighted India's aim of achieving Rs 3 lakh crore in defence manufacturing and Rs 50,000 crore in exports, stressing better utilisation of the existing defence budget and quicker domestic contracting.

Singh also outlined Mission Sudarshan Chakra, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which seeks to enhance India's multi-layered air defence and offensive capabilities. The programme will rely on a mix of Make in India projects, imports and IDDM initiatives. Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit said the armed forces are responsible for cross-border threats and are developing counter-UAS and integrated air defence systems.

Singh added that safeguarding critical assets remains a sovereign responsibility, with Mission Sudarshan Chakra aiming to protect key infrastructure nationwide. *—ANI*

Andaman to get India's 1st Coral Reef Research Centre

SRI VIJAY PURAM, 29 NOV

The Indian government will soon launch the National Coral Reef Research Institute (NCRRI) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with a funding of Rs 120 crore. This pioneering centre will be located in Chidiyatapu, South Andaman, and is set to serve as the nodal agency for coral reef research across the country.

"It will be an advanced coral reef research, conservation, and management centre," said Sivaperuman, officer-in-charge of the Zoological Survey of India's Andaman and Nicobar regional centre. He emphasised the reefs' vital role in coastal protection. Former ZSI director, Kailash Chandra, raised concerns about climate change's impact on marine habitats. *—PTI*

Six jailed for stopping Dalit cook in TN school

TIRUPUR, 29 NOV

Six people have been sentenced to two years' imprisonment for preventing a Dalit woman cook from preparing meals at a government school in 2018. A special court under the SC/ST Act convicted P Palanisamy Gounder, N Sakthivel, R Shanmugam, C Vellingiri, A Duraisamy and V Seetha Lakshmi for caste discrimination and related offences. The victim, P Pappal, 44, worked as a cook at the Government Higher Secondary School in Thirumalai Goundampalayam. The accused, all parents, objected to her cooking for the children, leading to protests and her transfer. Following a complaint, police registered a case against 35 people and arrested eight. Judicial Magistrate M Suresh convicted six, fined them Rs 5,000 each, and lodged them in Coimbatore Prison. *—PTI*

Union leaders held amid Punjab transport strike

PATIALA, 29 NOV

Contractual employees of Punjab's state-owned bus services continued their strike on Saturday, protesting tenders under the km-based bus scheme, with four union leaders – including Kulwant Singh and Raminder Singh – reportedly detained. Union leaders allege that the policy favours private operators and threatens thousands of state transport jobs. Sandeep Singh, Senior Vice President of the PUNBUS Contract Workers Union, said, "Until the leaders are released and workers are regularised, our strike will continue." The protests turned violent in Sangrur, where employees reportedly climbed onto buses and splashed petrol on police personnel, injuring the Dhuri Station House Officer. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Fake Sabarimala guest house website under lens

PATHANAMTHITTA, 29 NOV

Pathanamthitta police have uncovered a fraudulent website, sannidanamguesthouse.in, which deceived Lord Ayyappa devotees by offering guest house bookings at Sabarimala. The case was registered on Friday, and an investigation is ongoing. The website appeared in Google search results and listed two mobile numbers for booking rooms. Police suspect some devotees may have lost money while attempting to book. Investigations revealed one number belongs to a man named Hamid from Haryana, while efforts continue to trace the second. The FIR names Hamid, the website owner, and the second number's operator as accused. Charges have been filed under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita relating to cheating and joint liability, and the Information Technology Act for identity theft and cheating by personation. *—PTI*

Tamil Nadu rains submerge 1L hectares of paddy

Cyclone Ditwah to bring 4 days of rain, winds across Andhra

>>>Continued from Page 1

Farmers in Tamil Nadu reported that paddy cultivated on nearly one lakh acres, along with other crops, had been submerged following heavy rain triggered by Cyclone Ditwah. Fishermen from Chennai, Rame-swaram, Pamban and other coastal stretches remained ashore for the second consecutive day as rough seas continued to prevail.

Delta districts including Nagapattinam, Thiruvarur, Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai, Pudukkottai, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Tiruchirappalli and Karaikal recorded sustained heavy rain accompanied by strong winds. Several parts of Chennai, Kumbakonam and Cuddalore also experienced intense showers. Strong winds and high tides were reported along the Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam coasts.

In Chennai, officials said surplus water from the Chembarambakkam and Poondi reservoirs would be released into the sea as a precautionary measure. In Ramanathapuram, a tourist van was stranded near a marooned canal, though all occupants managed to escape unhurt through the rear door. Authorities have urged the public to avoid unnecessary travel, while tourists have been barred from visiting Dhanushkodi as a safety measure.

Boats moored at the shore amid gusty winds due to Cyclone 'Ditwah' in Chennai **PHOTO: PTI**

Fourteen National Disaster Response Force teams have been deployed across vulnerable districts such as Villupuram, Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, Thanjavur, Pudukkottai and Mayiladuthurai, with additional reinforcements placed in Chennai and Puducherry.

In Puducherry, Pondicherry Central University postponed all examinations scheduled for Saturday and declared a holiday for all classes following a Coast Guard alert on the approaching cyclone and heavy rain. Fresh exam dates will be announced later, the Registrar said. Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh is bracing for four days of heavy to extremely heavy rain from November 30 to December 3. The IMD has warned of intense rainfall in Tirupati, Chittoor, Prakasam, Nellore, Kadapa and Annamayya districts, with thunderstorms likely across coastal and Rayalaseema regions. Wind speeds may reach 60 kmph, with gale-force gusts up to 70 kmph expected on 30 November. Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the sea. *—PTI*

Court sends 3 doctors, preacher to 10-day custody for Delhi blast

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

A Delhi court on Saturday sent three doctors and a preacher, who were arrested in connection with the Red Fort blast, to 10 days' judicial custody.

All four accused, Muzammil Ganaie, Adeel Rather and Shaheena Saeed as well as Maulvi Irfan Ahmed Wagay, were produced before Principal and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandna, who sent them to 10-day judicial custody.

As of now, the NIA has arrested seven persons accused in the case, which is linked to a "white-collar" terror module busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

"The agency continues to pursue various leads in connection with the suicide bombing, and has been conducting searches across states in coordination with the respective police forces in a bid to identify and track others involved in the gruesome attack," the NIA said in a statement.

Dr Umar-un-Nabi, who was driving the explosives-laden i20 car that detonated outside the Red Fort, had allegedly bought the car in Ali's name. Wani was arrested after it emerged that Umar had been trying to "brainwash" him to becoming a suicide bomber, officials said. He was not persuaded but is alleged to have agreed to participate as an overground worker for the banned terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed.

PTI had earlier reported that the sophisticated terror module spearheaded by a group of doctors had been actively scouting for a suicide bomber since last year, with Umar being the alleged key planner.

Officials said Adeel's interrogation pointed to Umar being a "hardcore radical" who insisted that a suicide bomber was essential for their operations. Following this, Srinagar police sent a team to Qazigund in south Kashmir and detained Wani. *—PTI*

Myanmarese used Indians' GST credentials to traffic drugs: ED

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Investigation into a cross-border narcotics trafficking racket has found that Myanmarese nationals "misused" GST credentials of Indians to facilitate the purchase of raw material required for manufacturing drugs, the ED said.

The Central probe agency had conducted its first-ever searches along the India-Myanmar border on 27 November, after the registration of a money laundering case into a drugs trafficking case in Mizoram.

Locations across Aizawl and Champhai (along the India-Myanmar border) in Mizoram, Sribhumi (Karimganj) in Assam and Ahmedabad in Gujarat were raided as per the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

India shares a 1,643-km-long front with Myanmar on its eastern side.

Evidence gathered during the searches indicated that Indians procured Pseudoephedrine tablets and Caffeine Anhydrous for Myanmar nationals, enabling trans-border drug production and money laundering, the Enforcement Directorate said in a statement issued on Friday.

Cash seized during the first-ever raids conducted by the Enforcement Directorate along the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram **PHOTO: PTI**

The probe found the "misuse" of GST credentials belonging to Indians by Myanmar nationals to facilitate the purchase of raw materials essential for the manufacture of Methamphetamine.

"Evidence indicates that Indians procured Pseudoephedrine tablets and Caffeine Anhydrous for Myanmar nationals, enabling cross-border drug production and trafficking and also laundered money through this," it said. Cash worth Rs 46.7 lakh was seized from Hawala operatives, and 21 bank accounts were frozen during the raids. *—PTI*

Split in protesters as Munambam Waqf stir ends

KOCHI, 29 NOV

Differences have emerged among the protesters in Munambam over the decision to end their long-running relay hunger strike against land claimed by Waqf. While the Munambam Land Protection Council, which rep-resents around 600 families, has decided to conclude the protest on 30 November, a section of the protest-ers plans to continue until full ownership of the land is secured.

The 413-day-long agitation, staged on the premises of the Velankanni Matha Church in Munambam, is being called off following a recent Kerala High Court directive asking the state government to accept land tax pay-ments from the families until the case is disposed of, council members said.

"The Kerala government has assured that the remaining procedures will be completed soon. So we decided to end the protest," Joseph Rockey, a council member, said. However, he maintained that the agitation would resume if the assurances were not fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Philip, a member of the dissenting group opposing the withdrawal, said a new phase of protest will begin on Sunday.

"We have only been allowed to pay land tax temporarily. The core issue remains unresolved. We will continue until all our concerns are addressed," he said, adding that the fresh protest will not be held on the church premises. *– PTI*

Displaced people clash with security forces in Manipur

IMPHAL, 29 NOV

Hundreds of displaced people, seeking to return to their homes, clashed with security forces in Manipur's Imphal East district on Saturday, officials said.

The displaced people, who have been staying in relief camps after violence broke out in May 2023, were stopped by security forces at Yaingangpokpi when they were marching towards their homes at Gwaltabi, located on the district's periphery.

As the situation escalated, security forces used tear gas.

One of the agitators, S Ibemcha Devi, said, "The government says normalcy has been restored. Then, why are we not allowed to go home?"

An official said the situation continues to remain tense but under control.

Clashes between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and security forces have occurred many times after the Sangai Festival began on 21 November. *– PTI*

Assam eviction drive displaces 1,500 families

GUWAHATI, 29 NOV

An eviction drive was launched on Saturday in Assam's Nagaon district to remove encroachments from 795 hectares of reserved forest land, where around 1,500 families were living, officials said. The operation began in the Lutimari area amid heavy security deployment.

Notices had been issued to the encroachers three months ago, giving them two months to vacate. Residents requested an extra month, which the district administration granted. Over 1,100 families, living in both pucca and kuccha houses, have already left with their belongings, dismantling illegal structures. The remaining homes are being demolished as part of the drive.

Some residents claimed they had been living in the area for more than 40 years and were unaware it was forest land. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that since May 2021, over 160 sq km of encroached land has been cleared, with more than 50,000 people evicted. Eviction drives resumed on 16 June, displacing over 5,000 families since then. Most of those affected belong to the Bengali-speaking Muslim community, whose ancestors reportedly settled in these areas after losing land in the Brahmaputra's riverine regions due to erosion. *—PTI*

Court extends Anmol Bishnoi's NIA custody

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

A Delhi court on Saturday extended the NIA custody of deported gangster Anmol Bishnoi for seven more days.

Special Judge Prashant Sharma ordered the extension till 5 December in the hearing conducted at the NIA headquarters amid high security.

Wanted in connection with the killing of NCP leader Siddique, firing at actor Salman Khan's residence in April 2024, the killing of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, among other crimes, Anmol was "removed" from the US on 18 November. He was detained in the US in November last year.

Earlier on 19 November, Anmol, the brother and close aide of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, was sent to 11 days of NIA custody.

Absconding since 2022, US-based Anmol is the 19th accused to be arrested for his involvement in the terror-gangster syndicate led by his jailed brother Lawrence. *—PTI*

Delhi breathes very poor air

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Delhi's air quality remained in the "very poor" category on Saturday morning, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) at 332, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reported.

This was a slight improvement from Friday, when the AQI was 369. The CPCB classifies readings of 301–400 as "very poor" and 401–500 as "severe".

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) recorded a minimum temperature of 10.4°C and forecast a mainly clear day, with the maximum temperature likely reaching 25°C. Relative humidity stood at 90 per cent at 8.30am.

uthorities advised residents, especially children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions **PHOTO: ANI**

Authorities advised residents, especially children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions, to limit outdoor activity due to the persistently unhealthy air quality. *—PTI*

OPERATOR BOOKED

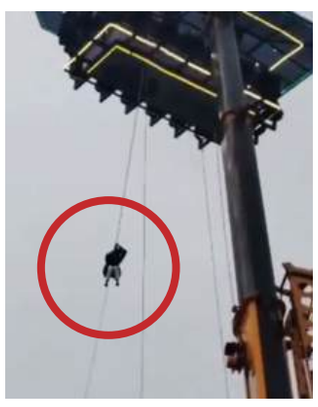
Crane failure strands tourist mid-air at Idukki sky-dining restaurant

IDUKKI, 29 NOV

A case has been registered against the operators of a sky-dining restaurant where four tourists, including two children, were stranded after a crane malfunctioned at Anachal here, police said on Saturday.

Vellathoval police registered a case against Sojan Joseph of Anachal, on whose land the sky-dining restaurant was operating, and its operator Praveen of Malayinchi, Udumbannoor, they said.

The group remained stuck for over two hours, about 150 feet above the ground, before fire and rescue personnel reached the site, after learning about the incident from news reports on Friday. The team safely rescued the four-member family using ropes.



As per the FIR, the restaurant was operating without bothering about public safety.

The case has been registered under Section 125 (endangering human lives) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 118(e) (act that causes danger to public safety) of the Kerala Police Act.

Meanwhile, following the incident, a stop memo has been issued to the restaurant after it was found to be operating without a licence from the civic body.

The Idukki district collector has also sought a report into the incident from the village officer regarding the restaurant and its operations, officials said. *– PTI*

Delhi seer sex assault case: 3 co-accused get bail

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

A Delhi court has granted bail to three co-accused in the ongoing sexual assault case involving Swami Chaitanyananda Saraswati. Judicial Magistrate Animesh Kumar heard the bail applications for the three accused – Kajal, Bhawna, and Shweta – who had been chargesheeted in the case but not arrested. Each co-accused is required to furnish a bail bond of Rs 20,000.

The case dates back to allegations against Chaitanyananda, who is accused of sexually harassing 16 students at a private management institute in southwest Delhi. He was arrested from Agra on 27 September and is currently in judicial custody amid claims of molestation involving multiple women.

Additionally, the court has issued a production warrant for Chaitanyananda in connection with another case involving the use of a fraudulent diplomatic number plate. The self-proclaimed godman is scheduled to appear in court on 2 December for further proceedings. *—PTI*

- The case dates back to allegations against Chaitanyananda, who is accused of sexually harassing 16 students at a private management institute.

HOMES RAZED FOR GAMES

Bulldozers razed 29 homes near the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday as part of preparations for the 2030 Commonwealth Games. The city plans a 24-metre-wide road through the Sabarmati area, providing direct access to the new Aquatic Stadium coming up near the cricket venue. The houses lay in the road's alignment, and despite eviction notices from the Municipal Corporation, residents did not vacate. Their petition to the High Court was rejected, clearing the way for all 29 structures to be demolished ***PHOTO: PTI***

'Delhi air crisis is slow poison, shortens life span'

The number of daily bus commuters has reduced, while private vehicle numbers have surged, placing additional stress on the city's air quality ***PHOTO: PTI***

Calling Delhi's worsening air pollution a form of "slow poison", the Congress on Saturday demanded urgent, collective action from the government, including consultations with all stakeholders and the formation of an MP-level committee to address what it described as a "national problem".

At a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit said the capital's toxic air had "crossed all limits", warning that it was no longer simply a seasonal concern but a public health emergency. "Delhi's polluted air is like slow poison," he said, adding that doctors now estimate that prolonged exposure to the city's air shortens the lifespan of a healthy person by six to seven years, with even more severe consequences for people already suffering from illness.

Dikshit accused both the BJP-led Centre and the AAP government in Delhi of focusing on political blame games instead of addressing the crisis. He said everyday citizens were suffering while the two governments "trade accusations" over the causes of pollution. "The people of Delhi are suffering under the governments' deception," he remarked. "If the government cannot control pollution, it has no right to be called a government."

Addressing common narratives around pollution, Dikshit said that while stubble burning and firecrackers during Diwali contribute to a temporary spike in winter, they are not the primary sources. "Only a small portion of air pollution comes from stubble burning and firecrackers. The major cause is vehicular pollution, which continues year-round and accounts for around 35 per cent," he said.

He described a dramatic deterioration in traffic conditions over the years. When Delhi was expanding, he said, the average traffic speed used to be 35–40 km per hour, but government inaction has since led to worsening congestion. Poor road infrastructure has slowed traffic further, resulting in a two-and-a-half-fold increase in vehicular pollution, he claimed.

Public transport, he argued, has also "collapsed". The number of daily bus commuters has reduced, while private vehicle numbers have surged, placing additional stress on the city's air quality.

He questioned why new metro routes were not being developed, noting that the expansion of the network had slowed despite rapidly rising demand.

Another major contributor, he said, is industrial pollution caused by factories operating on dirty fuels. Many of these units, he alleged, are illegal and cannot run without the "connivance" of the MCD, police and politicians. He questioned why the current government was not taking action similar to the large-scale shifting of polluting industries undertaken in 2004–05.

Dikshit also pointed to Delhi's mounting waste management failures. Piles of garbage across the city and frequent open burning of waste are contributing significantly to the toxic air, he said. Earlier efforts to encourage segregation and maintain public dustbins had worked well because citizens participated enthusiastically, but those systems had since been neglected. He criticised the government for abandoning the 'waste-to-energy' solution, claiming that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal falsely stated that emissions from such plants cause cancer, leading to the shelving of the project.

He urged the government to rebuild a serious, long-term strategy to reduce air pollution and involve the public in the process. He also called on the Delhi Lieutenant Governor to convene all stakeholders and launch a people-driven movement to tackle the crisis.

Dikshit stressed the need for substantial investment in road infrastructure, public buses and metro expansion, arguing that these basic facilities were being neglected due to governments "spending all the money on freebies". "You will get enough time to indulge in populist politics," he said. "If funds are exhausted on giving things free, there will be no resources left for essential services."

The push for broader political engagement on the issue came a day after Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanded a detailed discussion on Delhi's air pollution in the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament. Describing the situation as a "health emergency", Gandhi questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and criticised what he called the government's lack of urgency and accountability. He sought a strict, enforceable national action plan to tackle air pollution.

Gandhi also met a group of mothers at his residence to hear concerns about the impact of pollution on children's health, later sharing a video of the interaction.

Meanwhile, air quality in the capital remained in the "very poor" category on Saturday morning, with an AQI reading of 332 — marginally lower than Friday's 369, according to Central Pollution Control Board data. The CPCB classifies an AQI of 0–50 as good, 51–100 satisfactory, 101–200 moderate, 201–300 poor, 301–400 very poor, and 401–500 severe.

With pollution levels expected to rise further as winter progresses, the Congress reiterated that only a coordinated, multi-agency effort, backed by political consensus, would bring relief to the city's nearly 3 crore residents. "This is a national problem," Dikshit said. "It must be treated as one." *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Winter rains in Gaza bring new misery for Palestinians

Videos of children and families in Gaza scooping muddy water from their makeshift shelters have gone viral on social media, exposing once again the dire living conditions facing more than two million displaced Palestinians after two years of war. Winter's first heavy rains have turned camps into shallow lakes, leaving people splashing through ankle-deep water and blaming both Israel and Hamas for the misery that continues despite a ceasefire.

"All tents were destroyed," said Assmaa Fayad in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, where her shelter was battered during Tuesday's downpour. "Where is Hamas? Where are the people to see this rain and how our children are drowning?"

A Hamas spokesperson, Hazem Qassem, responded sharply in a Telegram message, insisting that "all the world's efforts to alleviate the disaster have failed because of the Israeli siege." Aid organisations, meanwhile, warn that the arrival of the rainy winter months will only worsen an already stark humanitarian situation marked by ongoing shortages of essential supplies. They are now scrambling to manage the flooding and repair basic infrastructure destroyed during the fighting.

Nearly all of Gaza's population of over two million was forced from their homes during the war, and most continue to live in tents or improvised shelters, some erected over the rubble of destroyed houses, without proper sewage facilities. Most families rely on cesspits dug beside their tents, which overflow once the rains intensify.

In Deir al-Balah, among the hardest-hit areas this week, residents spent hours assessing the damage. Reham al-Hilu stood beside the remains of her collapsed wood-and-metal shelter, which crumpled overnight. She said her head had been injured in the collapse.

"Rainwater flooded the mattresses," she said. "As you can see, everything is soaked, the clothes, everything, and my children are all soaked."

According to the UN humanitarian office, last week's downpours damaged at least 13,000 tents like al-Hilu's, "destroying what little shelter and belongings thousands of Palestinians in Gaza had left." The office said that aid agencies had begun preparations for winter as early as October, when the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect, bringing in winterised tents and other essential supplies.

However, these efforts have been severely hampered by the slow entry of aid. The UN says deliveries into the territory remain "severely constrained by Israeli authorities' restrictions on the entry of shelter supplies." COGAT, the Israeli defence body responsible for coordinating aid entry, has maintained that it is working to bring in additional winter materials. It did not respond to requests for comment on Tuesday.

Despite the obstacles, UN agencies and humanitarian groups distributed more than 3,600 tents, 129,000 tarpaulins and 87,000 blankets earlier this month. But aid workers say this falls far short of what is required.

Roads in Deir al-Balah have been transformed into murky rivers. In one widely shared video, a man wades through brown floodwater carrying a young daughter in each arm. Elsewhere, families can be seen kneeling on the ground, trying to soak up the water with cloths as their few remaining possessions float in the mud.

Although daily fighting has largely halted under the ceasefire, Israel continues to strike certain areas, claiming Hamas has violated the agreement. Both sides accuse the other of breaching the deal's terms. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians remain crammed into the half of Gaza's territory not controlled by Israeli forces, where services barely function and winter conditions pose new threats to health and safety.

The 10 October ceasefire has allowed more aid to enter Gaza, but the UN and other humanitarian organisations say that Palestinians still lack adequate food, medicine and shelter. Groups providing housing assistance in the occupied Palestinian territory warned in early November that about 260,000 Palestinian families, almost 1.5 million people, were at high risk as winter approached.

UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, said this week that it has enough shelter supplies to assist roughly 1.3 million Palestinians. But the agency also reported that Israel is continuing to block its attempts to bring relief materials into Gaza, despite the ceasefire's explicit requirement that aid be delivered to all those in need.

Back in Gaza City, another displaced resident, Abu Ghassan, stood over his drenched bedding, attempting to lift the mattresses off the flooded ground to protect his children.

"I'm lifting the mattresses so the children don't get soaked," he told Al Jazeera. "But the little ones were already drenched here. We don't even have proper tents." *—PTI*

Winter's first heavy rains have turned camps into shallow lakes, leaving people splashing through ankle-deep water and blaming both Israel and Hamas for the misery ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

When men drink, families suffer: The hidden toll on women & kids

Across all settings, the studies confirm that men drink more heavily and more frequently than women. When under the influence, many engage in harmful behaviour ***PHOTO: PTI***

Drinking alcohol is widely recognised as harmful to personal health, but its effects reach far beyond the individual. Evidence shows that men experience more alcohol-related harm, including aggression, accidents and injury, than women. Yet the women and children closest to them often bear the greatest burden.

I am part of a global network of health researchers examining how, and to what extent, men's drinking harms women and children. Our recent work synthesised findings from three major global reviews focusing on harm to women, harm to children, and the policies most likely to reduce alcohol-related harm caused by men. The reviews spanned 49 studies and 11 evidence reviews from 1990 to 2023, covering high-, middle- and low-income countries.

The aim was to identify clear policy directions and practical responses, and to outline the systems that need strengthening to improve the well-being of women and children worldwide.

What the evidence shows

Across all settings, the studies confirm that men drink more heavily and more frequently than women. When under the influence, many engage in harmful behaviour: aggression, intimidation, physical violence, and behaviours that disrupt family life. Drinking also leads to control, coercion and neglect of family responsibilities.

A recurring theme across countries was men's absence from home. Time and money were often spent in drinking spaces, rather than on household needs. When men spent family income on alcohol, it resulted in less money for food, school fees or healthcare – directly harming women and children.

Women reported a wide range of violent alcohol-linked behaviours, including punching, kicking, burning and beating. But not all harm is visible. Many spoke of the hidden emotional and social burdens of living with a drinking partner. They described shame, self-isolation to avoid public humiliation, and intense loneliness. These experiences were linked to depression, insomnia and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts.

One woman recalled:

"I really hate what alcohol does to him. We would fight at home; the next thing, he shows up at my workplace drunk and demands that we talk about our fight right there. He embarrasses me at my workplace."

Another said:

"I get sort of a trauma reaction if people are drinking too much around me, so I don't tend to socialise much in that area."

Children pay the price

The harm to children is both direct and indirect. Men's drinking can compromise their safety when they become targets of violence, or when they witness violence in the home. Research consistently shows that growing up amid violence increases the risk of poor school performance, low self-esteem and repeating cycles of violence later in life.

Children can be active victims of aggression, or silent ones – absorbing fear and instability around them.

Studies also highlight emotional neglect. Children of heavy-drinking fathers often feel less close to them, driven by fear or unpredictability. Drinking can increase conflict in the home, erode family bonds and reduce attention to childcare.

Although drinking is often treated as a private matter, it is shaped by wider social, community and policy contexts. Alcohol availability, price, outlet density and marketing all influence consumption patterns. These, in turn, affect safety and well-being at home and in the community.

The effects are amplified in poorer countries. Women and children in these settings suffer more because they have fewer resources and support systems. Harmful drinking and abuse of women are also more widely accepted as normal compared with wealthier societies.

What can be done?

Most government and public health responses focus on helping drinkers themselves. While interventions such as counselling, brief interventions, and peer-support programmes like Alcoholics Anonymous are beneficial, they are not enough. These efforts must sit within a supportive policy environment that acknowledges the gendered nature of harm.

Our research shows that policies and programmes must explicitly address harm to others – particularly women and children.

A key step is pairing alcohol treatment with community-based initiatives that address gender norms, violence and family well-being. Awareness programmes that frame alcohol misuse as a public health issue affecting families, combined with screening and treatment in primary care, can make a meaningful difference.

Some governments designate "dry zones" – neighbourhoods, municipalities or entire states where alcohol sales are restricted or banned. However, these zones are often limited to public spaces such as parks and roads, and their impact varies. They are only effective when accompanied by broader structural measures.

Globally, governments must prioritise proven, cost-effective alcohol policies, including: reducing the affordability and availability of alcohol, enforcing bans on sales to underage drinkers, and restricting alcohol marketing and advertising, especially to children.

But these measures are not enough on their own. Policymakers must recognise that alcohol-related harm is deeply intertwined with gender inequality and power dynamics. Responses to harmful drinking cannot be separated from efforts to address violence against women, social norms around masculinity, and the structural disadvantages faced by women and children. *—PTI*

Cyclone Ditwah kills 150 in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka declares state of emergency to expedite relief; storm heads towards Indian coast

COLOMBO, 29 NOV

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has declared a state of emergency throughout the island in view of the emergency situation that has emerged due to the devastation caused by floods. The official death toll was 150 while 191 remain missing, according to the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) as Sri Lanka battled Cyclone Ditwah for nearly a week.

However, the figure is expected to be much higher as severely affected areas suffer communication breakdown due to bad weather which has hampered verification of the impact from the disaster.

The need for speedy deployment of troops, police, the health sector, civil administration and the civil defence force to tackle the crisis situation is to be facilitated through the state of emergency, officials said.

Meanwhile, Cyclone Ditwah on Saturday exited Sri Lanka, meteorological officials said.

"We noticed Ditwah exiting Sri Lanka and heading towards the Indian coast," said Athula Karunanayake, Director General of the Meteorology Department. *—PTI*

INDONESIAN TOLL HITS 279

Landslides and flash floods killed at least 279 people in Indonesia, with authorities saying that the toll would rise further. At least 179 people were still missing. Parts of North Sumatra province were cut off by damaged roads and downed communications lines as rescue efforts were hampered by a lack of heavy equipment.

People use a boat to navigate a flooded street in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

THAILANAD ACKNOWLEDGES RELIEF LAPSES

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul acknowledged the government's shortcomings in flood management, as rains killed at least 162 people. More than 1.4 million households and 3.8 million people have been affected by floods triggered by heavy rains in 12 southern provinces. Anutin told press that when he visited the affected areas, he had apologised to the people "that the government was unable to take care of and protect them."

Ukraine drones hit Russia's 'shadow fleet'

ISTANBUL, 29 NOV

Two oil tankers said to be part of Russia's "shadow fleet" that were set ablaze off Turkey's Black Sea coast were hit by Ukrainian underwater drones, according to an official in Ukraine's security services (SBU) on Saturday. Tankers 'Kairos' and 'Virat' were struck in quick succession on Friday afternoon. Crew members on board both vessels were reported to be safe. "Video shows that after being hit, both tankers sustained critical damage and were effectively taken out of service. This will deal a significant blow to Russian oil transportation," the official said in a written statement. Russia uses hundreds of tankers – many sailing under different flags of convenience – to ship its oil to customers and sidestep sanctions. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

In a 1st for Aus, Albanese ties knot as sitting PM

MELBOURNE, 29 NOV

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese married his partner Jodie Haydon in a secretive and intimate ceremony on Saturday at his official residence in the national capital, Canberra. Albanese is the first prime minister to marry while in office. The couple were married by a civil celebrant before around 60 guests, including Oscar-winning actor Russell Crowe and several cabinet ministers, in an afternoon ceremony. The pair wrote their own vows, and their dog Toto was the ring bearer. Haydon's 5-year-old niece, Ella, was the flower girl. Labour Party strategists feared a lavish wedding during a cost-of-living crisis might damage the government's re-election prospects, so the ceremony was delayed until after the election. *—PTI*

State of emergency in Peru over Chile's migration policy

SANTIAGO, 29 NOV

Peru will declare a state of emergency along the country's southern border and deploy more armed forces to the area as a large number of Venezuelan migrants venture north from Chile, where anti-immigrant sentiment has surged, Peruvian President José Jarí said. Hundreds of thousands of migrants escaping crises in their home countries or seeking better opportunities abroad long have traversed the continent and the Peruvian border to build new lives in Chile. But scores of people without legal status in Chile — mostly Venezuelans — are now also headed in the other direction as Chile prepares to harden its stance against immigration. The favourite to win Chile's Presidential runoff on 14 December is Ultraconservative lawyer José Antonio Kast. *—PTI*

Ex- B'desh PM Khaleda Zia in critical condition

DHAKA, 29 NOV

In a heartfelt Facebook post from London, Bangladesh Nationalist Party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman, currently living in the UK since 2008, expressed his longing to return to Bangladesh as his mother, former prime minister Khaleda Zia, battles a "very critical" chest infection. Admitted to hospital on 23 November, the 80-year-old Zia requires intensive care from a team of specialists. Rahman noted, "like any child, I long to be near my mother at this moment of crisis," but clarified it "is not in my hands alone." The BNP, now the frontrunner in Bangladesh's political landscape, has been on the rise following the ousting of Sheikh Hasina. *—PTI*

US halts asylum claims after shooting

Members of the National Guard patrol in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC **PHOTO: PTI**

WASHINGTON, 29 NOV

The US government halted all asylum decisions following the National Guard shooting incident near the White House.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Joseph Edlow said that asylum officers have been directed to stop issuing decisions until enhanced vetting can be completed for every applicant.

"This pause will stay in place until we can ensure that every alien is properly vetted. The safety of the American people always comes first," he said in a statement posted on X.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio separately wrote on X that "President Trump's State Department has paused visa issuance for ALL individuals travelling on Afghan passports."

This comes after US President Donald Trump vowed to stop migration from all "third world countries".

Officials described the decision as part of a broader response to Wednesday's shooting near the White House that left killed one National Guard and left the other critically injured.

The shooting was allegedly carried out by 29-year-old Rahmanullah Lakanwal, an Afghan national who entered the US in 2021. Trump called Lakanwal crazy. *—ANI*

Firefighters put out a blaze a drone hit a residential building during Russia`s overnight drone attack in Kyiv, Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

Russian attacks kill 3 in Kyiv amid push to end war

KYIV, 29 NOV

Russian drone and missile attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, killed at least three people in the early hours of Saturday, local officials said.

The attacks came just before a second round of peace negotiations was set to begin, as a renewed US-led push to end the war gathers steam this week.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said 15 people were wounded, noting that falling debris from intercepted Russian drones hit residential buildings. He also said the western part of Kyiv had lost power.

The latest assault on Kyiv came as Ukrainian peace negotiators are due to meet their US counterparts in America this weekend, according to an official in Ukraine's Presidential administration.

A US delegation is then expected to travel to Moscow for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the second half of next week.

US President Donald Trump last week released a plan for ending the nearly four-year war. The 28-point proposal heavily favoured Russia, prompting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to quickly engage with American negotiators. European leaders, fearing for their own future facing Russian aggression, scrambled to steer the negotiations toward accommodating their concerns.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy announced Friday the resignation of his powerful chief of staff, Andrii Yermak, who was also the country's lead negotiator in the talks with the US, after Yermak's residence was searched by anti-corruption investigators.

The unprecedented search at the heart of Ukraine's government was a blow for the Ukrainian leader that risked disrupting his negotiating strategy at a time when Kyiv is under intense US pressure to sign a peace deal. *—PTI*

Regrettable: South Africa Prez on G20

President Cyril Ramaphosa said his US counterpart Donald Trump's announcement that South Africa will not be invited to the G20 during the America's presidency was "regrettable". Trump has continued with "punitive measures" despite efforts and numerous attempts by Ramaphosa to reset the diplomatic relationship with the US, the Presidency said in a statement. Despite repeated denials by both the South African government and white leaders in the country that refute Trump's allegation of genocide against white farmers, he has persisted in this claims, it said.

All orders signed by Biden's autopen are terminated: Trump

WASHINGTON, 29 NOV

US President Donald Trump on Friday said that documents signed by former Democratic President Joe Biden using an autopen stand terminated. He claimed that the majority of Biden's orders were signed with an autopen, a machine that produces a copy of a given signature.

"Any document signed by Sleepy Joe Biden with the Autopen, which was approximately 92 per cent of them, is hereby terminated, and of no further force or effect," Trump said. "The Autopen is not allowed to be used if approval is not specifically given by the President of the United States."

Trump reiterated that people had illegally operated the autopen.

The Republican leader threatened to prosecute Biden on "charges of perjury" if the latter claimed that staff was acting under his direction.

"The people who operated the Autopen did so illegally. Joe Biden was not involved in the Autopen process," Trump said. *—ANI*

Congo, Rwanda to sign deal in US

Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi will travel to the US next week to sign a final agreement with his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame aimed at securing peace in eastern Congo, the Congolese government said Friday, capping monthslong diplomatic efforts spearheaded by US President Donald Trump. Any signing by Congo, however, will be conditioned on Rwanda's withdrawal of support for the M23 rebels, Congo said. Eastern Congo has been battered by fighting between government forces and more than 100 armed groups, the most potent being the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels.

Taliban is helping terrorists enter Pakistan, says Army

ISLAMABAD, 29 NOV

The Pakistan Army said that Taliban is facilitating terrorists to infiltrate its border for carrying out terror attacks.

Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, who is the head of the army's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), made the allegation during an interaction with journalists on Tuesday, a video of which was released on Friday.

The Afghan Taliban opens fire at Pakistani border posts, "providing cover for the infiltration of terrorists and smugglers into Pakistan," he said.

"Borders are always guarded on both sides. Now on the other side is a country whose posts first fire at your posts and an exchange begins. And then they make terrorists pass through the gaps in between," Lt Gen Chaudhry said.

He said Pakistan had set up posts at a distance of 15-25 km on the 2,500km long border and added that it was impossible to completely seal the border which even the US is unable to do to stop infiltration from Mexico. He claimed that the Afghan Taliban were supporting the TTP, Balochistan Liberation Army, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al Qaeda and Daesh. *—PTI*

Israeli fire kills two children in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 29 NOV

Israeli fire killed two Palestinian brothers, ages 11 and 8, in southern Gaza on Saturday when a drone struck near a school sheltering displaced families in Beni Suhaila, marking the latest deaths of Palestinians as a shaky ceasefire with Hamas held.

Israel says the strikes are aimed at militants violating the truce, but the deaths have increasingly tested the fragile ceasefire. Both Israel and Hamas have accused the other of violating the deal.

At least 352 Palestinians have been killed across the territory since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect on 10 October, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. *—PTI*

A girl carries bread as she walks past destruction left by Israeli air and ground operations in Gaza City on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

SCAFFOLDING UNDER SCANNER

Graft probe starts over Hong Kong blaze

HONG KONG, 29 NOV

An investigation into corruption and negligence is underway following Hong Kong's deadliest fire in decades, which claimed at least 128 lives at the Wang Fuk Court complex. The blaze broke out on Wednesday afternoon, engulfing seven of the eight towers in the residential building that housed approximately 4,800 residents.

Alarmingly, some residents had voiced safety concerns regarding the renovation work more than a year prior.

Three men from a construction company have been arrested on suspicion of manslaughter and gross negligence, while eight additional individuals—including scaffolding subcontractors and project managers—face investigation for possible corruption. Police have not disclosed the suspects' company but confirmed that the Prestige Construction & Engineering Company was responsible for ongoing renovations.

Firefighters walk through the burned buildings at Wang Fuk Court in the Tai Po district of Hong Kong's New Territories on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

According to documents reviewed by the AP, complaints about the scaffolding materials were submitted to the Hong Kong Labour Department, which had conducted multiple inspections.

"The blaze ignited the foam panels, causing the glass to shatter and leading to the swift intensification of the fire," noted Chris Tang, the city's Secretary for Security.

First responders discovered that some fire alarms had failed to sound. It took firefighters nearly 40 hours to fully extinguish the fire, which resulted in 79 injuries, including the death of one firefighter.

"More than 128 innocent lives, what did they do wrong?" read a sign among the floral tributes left near the site. *—PTI*

POPE VISITS ISTANBUL'S BLUE MOSQUE

ISTANBUL, 29 NOV

Pope Leo XIV visited Istanbul's Blue Mosque on Saturday at the start of an intense day of meetings and talks with Turkiye's religious leaders, as well as a Mass for the country's small Catholic community.

The head of Turkiye's religious affairs directorate showed the Pope the tiled dome of the mosque and the Arabic inscriptions on its columns.

The Vatican had said the Pope would observe a "brief minute of silent prayer" there, but it wasn't clear if he had.

Leo was following his predecessors, who had made high-profile visits to the Sultan Ahmed Mosque, as it is officially known, in a gesture of respect to Turkiye's Muslim majority.

After the mosque visit, Leo is expected to meet Turkiye's Christian leaders at the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mor Ephrem. *—PTI*

Pope Leo XIV meets with the local church leaders at the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mor Ephrem in Istanbul, Turkey, Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: PTI

Air India more than a biz venture: Tata Chairman

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran remarked that Air India's transformation is not merely a business opportunity but a "responsibility" for the Tata Group. Speaking at an event commemorating JRD Tata's 121st birth anniversary, he noted the persistent challenges in the aviation sector, exacerbated by global supply chain issues impacting parts availability and fleet upgrades. "Every plan you have is becoming difficult because of the situations you face in this area," he stated. Since acquiring the struggling airline in January 2022, Tata Group has faced delays in their ambitious transformation plan. *—PTI*

Client fund breach: Prabhudas Lilladher banned

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has imposed a seven-day ban on stockbroker Prabhudas Lilladher Private Limited from 15 December, 2025, citing multiple rule violations related to client funds and reporting. The order, issued by Chief General Manager N Murugan, highlighted issues from a joint inspection conducted by Sebi, NSE, BSE, and MCX between April 2021 and October 2022. Allegations included misuse of client funds, failure to settle accounts on time, and excessive brokerage fees. Additionally, prolonged delays in returning idle balances and incorrect margin reporting were noted, leading SEBI to conclude that the firm's lapses warranted the prohibition as a supervisory measure. *—Agencies*

Lenskart Q2 profit up 20% to Rs 103.4 crore

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Eyewear company Lenskart Solutions has reported a 19.8 per cent jump in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 103.4 crore in the second quarter ended September 30, 2025, a company filing said on Saturday. The company had recorded a profit after tax of Rs 86.3 crore in the same period a year ago. Lenskart posted a 21 per cent jump in the consolidated revenue from operations to Rs 2,096.14 crore during the reported quarter, from Rs 1,735.68 crore in the September 2024 quarter. *—PTI*

Adani to invest $5B in high-capacity data centres

The investment comes after Google rolls out its $15B AI hub

AHMEDABAD, 29 NOV

Adani Group is preparing to make one of its biggest forays into digital infrastructure, planning up to USD 5 billion investment in high-capacity data centres linked to Google's upcoming AI hub in India, said sources.

According to the sources, the announcement comes as Google begins its expansive USD 15 billion, five-year plan to build its first native AI hub in India, a move the firm calls its largest investment in the country. The partnership is being made through AdaniConneX, the joint venture between Adani Group's flagship firm, Adani Enterprises and EdgeConneX, said sources.

As part of the deal, AdaniConneX is expected to scale up data-centre capacity significantly, tapping into surging demand for high-density compute infrastructure driven by AI and other advanced workloads.

This development underscores the rapid expansion of data-centre infrastructure in India PHOTO: PTI

According to the company's CFO, Jugeshinder Singh, the partnership extends beyond just Google. "It's not just Google; there are a lot of parties that would like to work with us, especially when the data-centre capacity goes to gigawatt and higher," he said, underlining AdaniConneX's ambition to attract multiple global and domestic clients.

- The partnership is being made through AdaniConneX, the joint venture between Adani Group's flagship firm, Adani Enterprises and EdgeConneX.

The planned AI-campus in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, will begin operations with a 1-gigawatt power capacity — making it one of the largest data-centre facilities in Asia, sources said.

This development underscores the rapid expansion of data-centre infrastructure in India. With global tech giants and domestic conglomerates ramping up investments, the country appears to be strengthening its position as a major hub for AI and cloud workloads, it added. *—Agencies*

DUE TO HIGH TARIFFS

India's exports to US down by 28.5%: GTRI

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

India's exports to its largest foreign market, the US, have suffered a sharp reversal due to aggressive tariff hikes, think tank GTRI said in a report on Saturday.

Between May and October 2025, shipments fell 28.5 per cent, from USD 8.83 billion to USD 6.31 billion, it said.

The decline followed a rapid escalation in US duties that began at 10 per cent on 2 April, rose to 25 per cent on 7 August, and reached 50 per cent by late August, making Indian goods among the most heavily taxed of any US trading partner, it added.

In comparison, China faced tariffs of about 30 per cent, while Japan dealt with only 15 per cent.

Tariff-exempt items such as smartphones, pharmaceuticals and petroleum products accounted for 40.3 per cent of October exports but still fell 25.8 per cent, from USD 3.42 billion in May to USD 2.54 billion in October -- a contraction of USD 881 million, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

It added that products facing uniform global tariffs -- mainly iron, steel, aluminum, copper and auto parts -- formed just 7.6 per cent of shipments in October.

Exports in this category fell 23.8 per cent between May and October, sliding from USD 629 million in May to USD 480 million in October, or about USD 149 million, it said.

The steepest decline occurred in labour-intensive products where India alone faced 50 per cent tariffs. *—PTI*

RBI issues 244 Master Directions for compliance

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has undertaken a major overhaul of its regulatory framework, consolidating thousands of circulars and guidelines into a streamlined set of Master Directions. The central bank said the move aims to reduce compliance burdens and improve clarity for banks and other regulated entities.

Under the exercise, the RBI has issued 244 Master Directions, bringing together instructions previously administered by the Department of Regulation on an "as-is" basis.

These are organised across various regulatory areas and issued separately for 11 categories of regulated entities, including commercial banks, small finance banks, payments banks, regional rural banks, co-operative banks, NBFCs, All India Financial Institutions, asset reconstruction companies and credit information companies.

The consolidation involved merging more than 9,000 existing circulars and guidelines into 238 function-wise Master Directions, specific to each category. Instructions issued by NABARD to rural and co-operative banks were also integrated in consultation with the institution.

Drafts were posted for public feedback on 10 October, 2025, attracting over 770 comments. Suggestions seeking regulatory changes were excluded, while relevant inputs were incorporated. *—ANI*

Reforms, manufacturing push drove Q2 growth to 8.2%: Goyal

VADODARA/NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Commerce and Industry Minister **Piyush Goyal** said the latest figures reflect reforms that promote domestic manufacturing and improve ease of doing business. He added that India's export performance has remained resilient despite trade uncertainties worldwide. Merchandise exports grew marginally during April–October, while services exports recorded a notable increase.

SBI Research's Eco wrap report projects overall GDP growth of around 7.6 per cent for FY26, with nominal GDP expected to reach approximately USD 4.1 trillion by March 2026. Manufacturing expanded by 9.1 per cent in the quarter, while construction and services grew 7.2 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively. The report also highlighted a striking surge in credit to micro, small and medium enterprises, signaling that growth is spreading deeper into the productive base.

With inflation contained and credit conditions improving, analysts expect continuity in economic momentum, placing India on track to achieve USD 5 trillion GDP by 2029.

India's economy grew by 8.2 per cent in the July–September quarter of FY26, its strongest performance in six quarters, reinforcing its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy. The expansion, which followed a 7.8 per cent rise in the previous quarter, was driven by higher public investment, strong services demand, rising industrial output and steady household consumption. Economist Kirit Parikh described the growth as "a very good achievement", crediting reforms in GST, labour policy and sustained infrastructure investment. He noted that improvements in connectivity and logistics, which take years to mature, were now beginning to deliver economic dividends. *—ANI*

India, ADB sign $800 million loan for projects

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed agreements for three loans worth over USD 800 million for projects in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement Saturday.

The Government of India's engagement with ADB for the finalisation of the loans was led by Joint Secretary (ADB and Japan), Department of Economic Affairs, under whose guidance the loan signing process was carried out.

Accordingly, the loan agreements for the Maharashtra Power Distribution Enhancement Programme for Agricultural Solarization (USD 500 million); Indore Metro Rail Project (USD 190.6 million), and Gujarat Skills Development Programme (USD 109.97 million) were signed by Saurabh Singh, Deputy Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of India, and Mio Oka, Country Director, India Resident Mission, on behalf of ADB.

In addition, a Technical Assistance grant of USD 1 million was also signed. *—ANI*

Finance Ministry records strong revenue, higher state funding

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

The Government of India has reported steady revenue collection and increased transfers to states for the current financial year up to October 2025, according to data released by the Ministry of Finance. Consolidated accounts show the Centre received Rs 18,00,475 crore, representing 51.5 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) for 2025–26.

Of this, Rs 12,74,301 crore came from net tax revenue, Rs 4,89,079 crore from non-tax revenue, and Rs 37,095 crore from non-debt capital receipts. The Ministry said Rs 8,34,957 crore has been devolved to state governments as their share of taxes Rs 1,11,981 crore more than the same period last year indicating stronger support for state finances and development initiatives.

Central Government expenditure reached Rs 26,25,619 crore, or 51.8 per cent of the BE. This includes Rs 20,07,876 crore in revenue expenditure and Rs 6,17,743 crore in capital expenditure, reflecting continued emphasis on infrastructure and capital formation.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Within revenue spending, interest payments stood at Rs 6,73,715 crore and major subsidies at Rs 2,46,575 crore. The figures highlight fiscal execution aligned with Budget targets. *—ANI*

3.9M RISE IN USER BASE

Jio leads in India's telecom sector, says TRAI report

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Reliance Jio has maintained its dominant position in India's telecommunications sector, adding the highest number of mobile and broadband users in October 2025, according to recent data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Jio's mobile user base increased by 3.9 million, lifting its market share to 41.4 per cent, a rise of 137 basis points over the last year and 1.6 times more than its nearest rival, Bharti Airtel.

In the wireline segment, Jio also showcased impressive growth, adding nearly four times more users than its closest competitor, largely due to its popular AirFiber service. The wireless broadband market witnessed Jio's growth outpacing rivals, with the company adding significantly more users than Airtel in the preceding three months.

Overall, India's broadband subscribers rose to 999.81 million by the end of October, reflecting a 0.42 per cent growth. The number of Mobile Number Portability requests stood at 15.05 million in the same month.

Jio accounted for 7.39 million of the 5G FWA users, compared to Airtel's 2.51 million, demonstrating a clear lead in the growing market. —ANI

THE AI EFFECT

3 years on, ChatGPT has rewritten rules of online search

MISSISSIPPI, 29 NOV

Three years ago, if someone needed to fix a leaky faucet or understand inflation, they usually did one of three things: typed the question into Google, searched YouTube for a how-to video or shouted desperately at Alexa for help.

Today, millions of people start with a different approach: They open ChatGPT and just ask.

I'm a professor and director of research impact and AI strategy at Mississippi State University Libraries. As a scholar who studies information retrieval, I see that this shift of the tool people reach for first for finding information is at the heart of how ChatGPT has changed everyday technology use.

CHANGE IN SEARCHING

The biggest change isn't that other tools have vanished. It's that ChatGPT has become the new front door to information. Within months of its introduction on 30 November, 2022, ChatGPT had 100 million weekly users. By late 2025, that figure had grown to 800 million. That makes it one of the most widely used consumer technologies on the planet.

Surveys show that this use isn't just curiosity – it reflects a real change in behaviour. A 2025 Pew Research Centre study found that 34 per cent of US adults have used ChatGPT, roughly double the share found in 2023.

Among adults under 30, a clear majority (58 per cent) have tried it. An AP-NORC poll reports that about 60 per cent of US adults who use AI say they use it to search for information, making this the most common AI use case. The number rises to 74 per cent for the under-30 crowd.

Traditional search engines are still the backbone of the online information ecosystem, but the kind of searching people do has shifted in measurable ways since ChatGPT entered the scene.

For years, Google was the default for everything from "how to reset my router" to "explain the debt ceiling."

A 2025 US consumer survey found that 55 per cent of respondents now use OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's Gemini AI chatbots about tasks they previously would have asked Google search to help them with, with even higher usage figures for the UK.

Another analysis of more than 1 billion search sessions found that traffic from generative AI platforms is growing 165 times faster than traditional searches, and about 13 million US adults have already made generative AI their go-to tool for online discovery.

This doesn't mean people have stopped "Googling," but it means ChatGPT has peeled off the kinds of questions for which users want a direct explanation instead of a list of links. ChatGPT is faster, feels more conversational and feels more definitive.

One report using Similarweb data found that traffic from Google to news sites fell from over 2.3 billion visits in mid-2024 to under 1.7 billion in May 2025, while the share of news-related searches ending in zero clicks jumped from 56 per cent to 69 per cent in one year.

Google search excels at pointing to a wide range of sources and perspectives, but the results can feel cluttered and designed more for clicks than clarity. ChatGPT, by contract, delivers a more focused and conversational response that prioritises explanation over ranking. The ChatGPT response can lack the source transparency and multiple viewpoints often found in a Google search. In terms of accuracy, both tools can occasionally get it wrong.

SMART SPEAKERS AND YOUTUBE

The impact of ChatGPT has reverberated beyond search engines. Voice assistants, such as Alexa speakers and Google Home, continue to report high ownership, but that number is down slightly.

One 2025 summary of voice-search statistics estimates that about 34 per cent of people ages 12 and up own a smart speaker, down from 35 per cent in 2023. This is not a dramatic decline, but the lack of growth may indicate a shift of more complex queries to ChatGPT or similar tools.

By contrast, YouTube remains a giant. As of 2024, it had approximately 2.74 billion users, with that number increasing steadily since 2010. Among US teens, about 90 per cent say they use YouTube, making it the most widely used platform in that age group. But what kind of videos people are looking for is changing.

People now tend to start with ChatGPT and then move to YouTube if they need the additional information a how-to video conveys. For many everyday tasks, such as "explain my health benefits" or "help me write a complaint email," people ask ChatGPT for a summary, script or checklist. They head to YouTube only if they need to see a physical process.

You can see a similar pattern in more specialised spaces. Software engineers, for instance, have long relied on sites such as Stack Overflow for tips and pieces of software code.

SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?

Three years in, ChatGPT hasn't replaced the rest of the tech stack; it's reordered it. The default search has shifted. Search engines are still for deep dives and complex comparisons. YouTube is still for seeing real people do real things. Smart speakers are still for hands-free convenience.

But when people need to figure something out, many now start with a chat conversation, not a search box. That's the real ChatGPT effect: It didn't just add another app to our phones – it quietly changed how we look things up in the first place. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Srihari Nataraj sets sights on success in Asian Games

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

India's ace swimmer Srihari Nataraj is looking forward to making a splash during next year's Commonwealth and Asian Games after making a huge impact in the Khelo India University Games with a mind-boggling nine gold medals despite being nowhere near his best.The 24-year-old Bengaluru swimmer, a multiple national record holder, finished with 11 medals nine gold and two silver here as he helped Jain University win 45 medals from the pool, including 27 gold.Nataraj's class was on display as the youngster, who recently ended his season with seven medals in the Asian Aquatics Championships in Ahmedabad, did not push himself in the pool but remained way ahead of other competitors.—*PTI*

Sharma wins twin titles at ITF World Junior Tennis Tour

NEW DELHI, 29 NOV

Praneel Sharma completed a memorable double at the ITF World Junior Tennis Tour J100 tournament, clinching both the singles and doubles titles as Roundglass Tennis Academy swept the honours at the DLTA Tennis Stadium here on Saturday. Fifth seed Praneel defeated fellow academy player and third seed Aashravya Mehra 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (8-6) in a hard-fought boys' singles final. He then paired with Aditya Mor to secure the doubles crown, beating top seeds Tavish Pahwa and Samarth Sahita 6-4, 6-2 in straight sets. Praneel beat fourth seed Vraj Gohli 6-4, 6-1 in the semifinals before overcoming second seed Aradhya Kshitij 7-6, 3-1 (retd) in the quarterfinals.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Khalid Jamil owns up to Bangladesh's defeat

KOLKATA, 29 NOV

Indian football head coach Khalid Jamil on Saturday took full responsibility for the country's embarrassing loss to Bangladesh and said the Indian Super League must start at the earliest to arrest the national team's alarming slide. India, winless in five straight Asian Cup qualifying matches, has slumped to 142 in the FIFA rankings, their lowest in nearly a decade, continuing a steep decline that began after the Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers. The 0-1 defeat in Dhaka was their first to Bangladesh in more than two decades. "Last match result, I don't blame Shabbir (Ali) sir (technical committee vice chairperson), IM Vijayan (technical committee chairperson), Kalyan (Chaubey) sir who supported me. I take the full responsibility," Khalid said.—*PTI*

Aditi is tied-11th, Avani moves into top-20

MALAGA, 29 NOV

Aditi Ashok was just outside the top-10, but Avani Prashanth made a good move up to get into the top-20 at the halfway stage of the Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de Espana here. Aditi, a former winner of this event, shot 2-under 70 and moved to 5-under 139 and was tied 11th. Avani brought home the best second round card of 3-under 69, to get to 4-under and was tied 17th. Among the other three Indians, Pranavi Urs (71) was T-47 at 1-over total, Hitaashee Bakshi (76) and Diksha Dagar (75) were both T-64 at 5-over. —*PTI*

First ODI: High-stakes audition for Rohit, Kohli

ODI series is an important opportunity for Gambhir

RANCHI, 29 NOV

India will look to address several lingering selection puzzles when they take on South Africa on Sunday in the first ODI of the three-match series, where Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli return to the set-up for a short audition that could well shape their 2027 World Cup fate.

Both Rohit and Kohli now compete in just one international format, and with India scheduled to play only six ODIs in the next two months three against the Proteas and three versus New Zealand at home in January the stakes have rarely been higher for two of Indian cricket's modern-day greats. The performance in these games could have a direct bearing on their prospects for the 2027 ODI World Cup. It may not seal their 2027 World Cup destinies, but it begins a high-stakes audition one that could either extend two legendary careers or nudge them closer to an inevitable sunset.

Incidentally, it was at this very JSCA Stadium back in 2013 that Rohit Sharma was first backed as a full-time opener a defining moment that transformed not only his white-ball career but also India's 50-over outlook for years.

Gambhir is in talks with Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli PHOTO: PTI

South Africa must improve 'clutch temperament' as ODI rebuild continues

-Ashwell Prince, South Africa batting coach

More than a decade later, the 37-year-old walks into Ranchi again, this time seeking a different kind of revival as India attempts to rebuild after losing the home Test series.

Head coach Gautam Gambhir, too, enters this series under scrutiny, though his job is not under threat since his contract runs till the 2027 World Cup. This ODI series is an important opportunity for Gambhir to stabilise the narrative and showcase clarity in India's white-ball direction. While the ODIs may not be his immediate priority with the T20 World Cup at home looming next year, Gambhir will nevertheless be keen to restore stability and demonstrate direction in India's white-ball approach.

BCCI to hold meeting on Kohli, Rohit's future

The BCCI is planning to hold a crucial meeting between selectors and team management to discuss the way forward for Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, with an eye on the 2027 ODI World Cup, said a report.

It added that top BCCI officials, coach Gautam Gambhir, and chief selector Ajit Agarkar are likely to meet in Ahmedabad after the third India vs South Africa ODI in Visakha patnam next week. —*PTI*

INDIA VS SOUTH AFRICA ODI

INDIA vs SOUTH AFRICA
Match starts at
1.30 pm IST

HEAD TO HEAD AT RANCHI

PLAYED:	94
SA WON:	51
INDIA WON:	40
NO RESULT	3

KL Rahul admits Indian batters' spin struggles

RANCHI, 29 NOV

Stand-in ODI skipper KL Rahul on Saturday conceded that Indian batters' repeated struggles against spin, especially on home tracks, remain a concern, but he didn't have a "definitive answer" to the decline of their traditional strength. His comment comes amid a worrying pattern of the Indian batting line-up's repeated buckling against spinners on home tracks in Test cricket over the last two seasons once their fortress.

New Zealand in 2024 and then South Africa recently whitewashed India 3-0 and 2-0 respectively, on the back of relentless spin bowling led by left-arm spinners Mitchell Santner, Ajaz Patel (NZ) and off-spinner Simon Harmer (SA) on pitches that had dollops of turn.

"We haven't played spin well enough in the last couple of seasons. I really don't know why we did it earlier and why we aren't doing it now. I don't have a definitive answer. All we can do is to look at how to get better individually and as a batting group," Rahul said on the eve of the first ODI against South Africa here.

Rahul said the batters will have to explore technical and tactical adjustments, and it will be a long haul. "It won't change overnight. We'll look at what improvements we need and hopefully by the time the Sri Lanka and Australia series come around, we'll be better prepared. We'll also reach out to seniors who played spin exceptionally well," he added. Rahul said Indian batters must individually "seek answers" and fine-tune their technique if they are to reclaim their traditional edge against spinners. The skipper said he had not yet inspected the Ranchi surface but expected a good batting wicket, going by past ODIs here.—*PTI*

KL Rahul PHOTO: PTI

SULTAN AZLAN SHAH CUP 2025

Penalty Corners accounted for half of India's 14 goals against Canada PHOTO: PTI

India thrashes Canada 14-3 to secure spot in final

IPOH, 29 NOV

India's men's hockey team on Saturday thrashed Canada 14-3 in its final round-robin fixture of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025 in Ipoh, Malaysia, to secure a place in the final. Defender Jugraj Singh was India's leading scorer with four goals.

He converted three Penalty Corners and added one from a penalty stroke. Abhishek, Amit Rohidas, and Rajinder Singh scored two goals each, while Selvam Karthi, Nilakanta Sharma, Sanjay, and Dilpreet Singh chipped in with one apiece. The result ensures India will finish in the top two on the points table irrespective of other results later in the day. The Craig Fulton-coached side is likely to face Belgium in the final, the same team that handed India its only defeat in the round-robin stage.Belgium, currently on 10 points, faces New Zealand, which has seven, later on Saturday. New Zealand has an outside chance of qualifying for the final but needs a win by a margin of at least six goals. —*PTI*

PIASTRI WINS SPRINT RACE AT QATAR GP

LUSAIL, 29 NOV

Oscar Piastri won the Qatar Grand Prix sprint race from pole position Saturday to move 22 points behind McLaren teammate Lando Norris heading into Sunday's main Formula 1 race.

Piastri's sprint win gave him eight points, with seven going to Mercedes driver George Russell in second place. The championship leader Norris took six points for his third-place finish, and Verstappen got five for finishing fourth."-Yeah, the car was good," Piastri said. "Let's keep it going."Norris started the sprint from third on the grid and Verstappen from sixth.

The Dutchman was let through by his Red Bull teammate Yuki Tsunoda on the first lap, but could not get close enough to pressure Norris.Heading into Sunday's penultimate race of the season, Norris had 396 points, Piastri 374 and Verstappen 371. —*PTI*

SYED MODI INTERNATIONAL

Srikanth, Treesa-Gayatri enter final

LUCKNOW, 29 NOV

Former champion Kidambi Srikanth and defending women's doubles winners Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand notched up contrasting wins to progress to the men's and women's doubles finals of the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Saturday.

The 32-year-old Srikanth, who lifted the title in 2016, staved off a spirited challenge from compatriot and 2023 national champion Mithun Manjunath to prevail 21-15 19-21 21-13 in a pulsating last-four clash.

A 2021 World Championships silver medallist, Srikanth, who had earlier reached the final of the Malaysia Masters this season, now awaits the winner of the other semifinal between Hong Kong's Jason Gunawan and Japan's Minoru Koga.

Moments before Srikanth's victory, world No.14 Treesa and Gayatri displayed sharp tactical awareness and excellent control of the conditions to record a commanding 21-11, 21-15 win over Malaysia's world No.33 Ong Xin Yee and Carmen Ting in the women's doubles semifinals. —*PTI*

Faf du Plessis to skip IPL 2026

JOHANNESBURG, 29 NOV

Former South African captain Faf du Plessis on Saturday said he will not be participating in the Indian Premier League for the first time in 14 years, but will be exploring an opportunity in the Pakistan Super League in 2026.

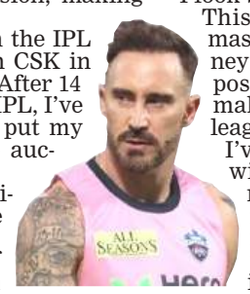
Du Plessis made his IPL debut in 2012 for Chennai Super Kings and made an instant impression, making 398 runs.

Later, he won the IPL title twice with CSK in 2018 and 2021."After 14 seasons in the IPL, I've decided not to put my name into the auction this year.

It's a big decision, and one that comes with a lot of gratitude when I look back.

This league has been a massive part of my journey, du Plessis said in a X post.But he vowed to make a return to the league in future.

I've been lucky to play with world-class teammates, for amazing franchises, and in front of fans whose passion is like nothing else. —*PTI*



HC allows Kumar's candidacy for KSCA president's post

BENGALURU, 29 NOV

Veteran sports administrator KN Shanth Kumar on Saturday expressed relief after the High Court declared his nomination papers for the post of Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) valid, setting aside an earlier decision of the Electoral Officer.

The Karnataka High Court order means that former Indian pacer Venkatesh Prasad will now have competition for the KSCA president's post during the elections scheduled on 7 December.

"There's only one way you can view it. It's a welcome development. I'm very relieved that the court has seen that I'm eligible. And now we're working towards building for the election," Shanth Kumar, who wore many hats as a sports administrator over three decades, told PTI. Shanth Kumar, who is also one of the Directors on the PTI Board, has been a steward of the Bangalore Turf Club, besides being a council member of the Indian Golf Union (IGU). He was also the non-playing captain of the Indian golf team during the 2002 Asian Games held in Busan, South Korea.

In today's order, the state High Court also asked the KSCA Electoral Officer to publish the list of candidates for the post of president.

While setting aside the EO's order dated November 24, Justice Suraj Govindaraj said the remaining electoral process should be conducted as per the calendar earlier decided by the High Court.

So, does Shanth Kumar need to file a fresh nomination?

"From what I can understand, the (existing) nomination holds because what the court has done is...it has quashed the order of the electoral officer. —*PTI*

Ashes 2025-26: Mark Wood ruled out of second Test

LONDON, 29 NOV

England pacer Mark Wood is set to be ruled out of the second Ashes Test against Australia in Brisbane after reportedly suffering a knee injury in the series opener.

Wood did not train on Saturday as the side began preparations for the day-night Test at the Gabba. The same injury had kept the express pacer out of England's home series against India earlier this year.

The 35-year-old bowled just 11 overs in the opening encounter and could not pick a wicket.

Josh Tongue is likely to replace Wood in the line-up, which features three other pacers, Jofra Archer, Brydon Carse, and Gus Atkinson.

England had lost the first Test in Perth by eight wickets. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE SEASON 4

Defending champs MI to take on RCB in opener on 9 Jan

MUMBAI, 29 NOV

Harmanpreet Kaur-led defending champions Mumbai Indians will face 2024 winners Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opening match of the fourth Women's Premier League on January 9 at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai.

In a first for the tournament, the WPL final will not be held on a weekend, with the summit clash scheduled for a Thursday (5 February), likely to avoid a clash with the men's T20 World Cup, which begins the same week in India and Sri Lanka. The T20 World Cup opens with a match between Pakistan and the Netherlands on 7 February Saturday) in Colombo.

The 28-day, 22-match WPL will be played across two venues.

DY Patil Stadium, which witnessed India's maiden women's ICC global title the ODI World Cup win over South Africa earlier this month will host the first 11 matches, including afternoon double-headers on 10 January and 17, as per the schedule announced on Saturday.

All the remaining games in this leg will be evening fixtures. The league will then shift to the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara, which will stage the remaining 11 matches, including the Eliminator on 2 February and the final on 5 February.

This is also the first time the WPL will be played in a January-February window, as the previous three editions were held in February–March, just before the IPL, often overlapping with international fixtures. The format remains unchanged: with the five teams Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, UP Warriorz, Gujarat Giants and Delhi Capitals to play each other twice in a double round-robin. The top team progresses straight to the final, while the second and third-placed sides face off in the Eliminator for the remaining spot. —*PTI*

WPL SEASON 4 SCHEDULE

- In Navi Mumbai: 9 January: MI vs RCB 10 Jan: UP Warriorz vs GG and MI vs DC; 11 Jan: DC vs GG; 12 Jan: RCB vs UP Warriorz; 13 Jan: MI vs GG; 14 Jan: UP Warriorz vs DC; 15 Jan: MI vs UP Warriorz; 16 Jan: RCB vs GG; 17 Jan: UP Warriorz vs MI and DC vs RCB
- In Vadodara: 19 Jan: GG vs RCB; 20 Jan: DC vs MI; 22 Jan: GG vs UP Warriorz; 24 Jan: RCB vs DC; 26 Jan: RCB vs MI; 27 Jan: GG vs DC; 29 Jan: UP Warriorz vs RCB; 30 Jan: GG vs MI; 1 February: DC vs UP Warriorz
- Eliminator: 3 Feb; Final: 5 Feb (both in Vadodara)